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THE ANGEL OF  
THE ASSASSINATION  
(CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY)





CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY

AFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF MARAT

*From the painting by Paul Baudry, first exhibited  
in Salon in 1861*

# THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

MARIE-CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY D'ARMONT

JEAN-PAUL MARAT

JEAN-ADAM LUX

A STUDY OF  
THREE DISCIPLES OF  
JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

BY

JOSEPH SHEARING



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"Noubliez pas le vers de Corneille:

'Le crime fait a honte et non pas l'échafaud.'

C'est demain à huit heures qu'on me juge ce 16 Juillet.

"—Corday."

*Last letter of Charlotte de Corday to her father.*

*Quoting from Thomas Corneille's drama, Le Comte  
d'Essex.*



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD

page ix

ONE

NORMAN PASTORAL

TWO

LADIES IN SECLUSION

THREE

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GENTLEWOMAN

FOUR

ENTHUSIASM

FIVE

ROSA MYSTICA IN HORTO INCLUSO

SIX

THE KNIFE

SEVEN

THE ALTAR OF THE COUNTRY

EIGHT

THRENODY

EPILOGUE

ECHOES

AUTHOR'S NOTE

page 323

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

page 334

BIBLIOGRAPHY

page 336



## ILLUSTRATIONS

CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY after the Assassination of  
Marat. *From the painting by Paul Baudry,*  
*first exhibited in Salon in 1861* *Frontispiece*

CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY. *From Charles Waltner's*  
*engraving of Hauer's portrait* *facing page 96*

JEAN-PAUL MARAT. *A lithograph by Henri*  
*Grevedon from the painting by Joseph*  
*Boze* *facing page 200*

EXECUTION OF CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY. *From*  
*James Idaripila's engraving of the painting*  
*by F. Beys* *facing page 260*





## FOREWORD

THE following pages contain an account of the life of the woman known as Charlotte de Corday, with which are interwoven the lives of the man whom she slew and the man who died for championing her memory. It is indeed impossible, if a true balance is to be preserved in the story of Mlle. de Corday, to ignore either Jean-Paul Marat or Jean-Adam Lux. Nor is it complete without some reference to the man who inspired these people, complete strangers until they met in the summer of 1793, to destroy each other. Jean-Paul Marat had never heard of Charlotte de Corday when she entered his presence on that afternoon of July 13th, 1793. Jean-Adam Lux had never heard of Charlotte de Corday until she had only a few days to live; he never saw her until she was on her way to death.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's teachings inflamed, exalted and brought together these three people of different races, to their destruction and their immortality. The Sardinian French cosmopolitan, the pure-bred Norman, the German from Mayence, had each in several ways and according to a peculiar temperament, imbibed the doctrines of Rousseau, and the two latter had brooded long and deeply over the book that had been the inspiration of the Genevan watchmaker's son—*Plutarch's Lives of Illustrious Men*.

Not only then are these three people of remarkable interest because of the tragic drama they played in the midst of anarchy, but because they received the impetus for their actions from a common source.

## FOREWORD

To force this point would be vexatious, for in each case character, circumstance, environment, shaped and directed the life, but in the background was always *Du Contrat Social*, *Emile*, the enthusiasm for the heroes of Plutarch, an almost frantic idealism, an ardent admiration for antiquity and its fabulous virtues.

The story of Charlotte de Corday arouses no controversy, postulates no problem; it is simple, straightforward and well authenticated to most of the smallest details; the slight discrepancies in one or two unimportant particulars have been dealt with in the Note given above the Bibliography at the end of this volume. Though the main outlines of the story I have here attempted to tell are well known, it has never been related to English readers in full detail and as a consecutive narrative based on the vast contemporary material and the researches of modern French scholars. This is my excuse for essaying a subject as difficult as fascinating.

The title—a translation of Alphonse Lamartine's "*L'ange de l'assassinat*"—may appear too melodramatic for what professes to be a sober study of facts, but the subject itself is melodramatic as only reality can be.

J. S.

*Paris and Vimoutiers,  
Spring and Summer, 1934.*

ONE

NORMAN PASTORAL

“Peuple, livrons-nous aujourd’hui aux transports d’une pure allégresse! Demain nous combattrons encore les vices et les tyrans!”

*Maximilien Robespierre.*

“The origin of heroism might proceed from the opinions of some philosophers who taught that the souls of great men were often raised to the stars and introduced among the immortal gods. According to these stories, the ancient heroes inhabited a pure and serene climate, situate above the moon.”

*Classical Dictionary, 1788.*

“I beheld the shape of Charlotte Corday beyond the moon.”  
*Klopstock.*

IN the month of July, 1768, Madame de Corday d'Armont came for a visit from her house at Mesnil-Imbert to the farm of Ronceray-les-Ligneriers, near Vimoutiers, which was part of her husband's land and where one of her relations resided. She was a gentle, quiet woman of a melancholy and resigned appearance, of an old Norman family, entitled to be called *noble dame*, but weighted down by the burden of aristocratic poverty. She was pretty, but delicate, and had lost the sight of one eye.

Ronceray is situated near the borders of Orne and Calvados, in a lonely part of Normandy. Meadows, orchards and marshy ground surrounded the modest farm-house, which was little better than the dwelling of a well-to-do peasant, though dignified by the title of *logis*. It consisted of two floors, the ground rooms being paved with flagstones; the windows were low and narrow, the fireplaces large and open. A natural spring flowing into a pleasant sheet of water graced the home fields and the immediate landscape of pasturage and orchards of pear trees was encircled by irregular hills.

Madame de Corday d'Armont had been married four years and was the mother of two boys, Jacques-François and Charles-François. She was expecting the birth of a third child, and while she was reposing in the isolated farm-house she was suddenly taken by the pangs of labour and her daughter was born in the humble bedchamber on the first floor. In order that mother and infant might not be disturbed, and as a sign of rejoicing that another child had been born to

the noble house of Corday, one of the most ancient in the Calvados and the Orne, the peasants beat the marshes all night to silence the frogs.

The day after her birth the infant was taken to the little church of *Saint Saturnin-des-Lignerles* which, austere and lonely, yet stands, environed by fertile fields and wind-shaped oaks, in a narrow, peaceful valley. M. de Corday d'Armont himself was present at the baptism, the godmother was *noble dame*, Françoise-Marie-Anne-Levaillant de Corday, and the godfather, *messire* Jacques-Alexis-de-Gautier, *écuyer seigneur* of Mesnival, a relation to Madame de Corday d'Armont.

The child was christened Marie-Anne-Charlotte, and when her birth was registered at the *mairie* of Exorches, her father was described as *messire* Jacques-François de Corday *écuyer seigneur* d'Armont, and her mother as *noble dame* Marie-Jacqueline de Gautier. Marie-Anne-Charlotte might then claim on either side blood that entitled her to rank among the provincial nobility.

She was also, on either side, of pure Norman descent. The Cordays could trace their titles of nobility to 1077; their arms were surmounted by the coronet of a Count, the blue shield with the three broken chevrons (*d'azur à trois chevrons, brisés d'or*) was distinguished by the rebus *Corde et Ore*. These Norman gentlemen, of untainted blood and unsmirched reputations, soldiers, civil servants, modest landowners, lived from generation to generation on their hereditary estates. They were proud of the title *gentilshommes*, that is, nobles of the land and the sword, owing their rank to their services, not to court

favour. Sturdy, robust, independent, typical Normans, with a strain of mysticism and obstinacy, the Cordays had not produced by 1768 any outstanding character, although there was, especially among the women, a reputation for a certain eccentricity. They were, however, connected by marriage with two of the most famous names in French literature; Marie-Anne-Charlotte de Corday d'Armont was the great-granddaughter of Pierre Corneille, whose grand-daughter had espoused Adrien de Corday in 1701. Through this marriage the Cordays might also claim kinship with Bernard de Fontenelle, Corneille's nephew, who lived to be a hundred years old and who was said to have a second brain instead of a heart within his breast.

\* \* \* \* \*

M. de Corday d'Armont took his wife and infant daughter back to his father's domain of Mesnil-Imbert, the Manor house of which, though officially described as *manoir seigneurial*, was no more than a comfortable farm-house.

M. de Corday de Cauvigny's estate of Mesnil-Imbert was enclosed by wooded hills, crowned by wind-swept oaks, and the Manor house was built on a slope above a valley and covered with apple trees. Handsome chestnut trees shaded the sheds, barns and bake-house; a deep well provided abundant fresh water. The dwelling itself was solid and attractive, with its peaceful air of family life and the natural labours of the land. The house, heavily beamed, was covered by a hip roof of slate, the bricks faded to an old rose-colour, the windows of unequal size, the entrance modest. A simple flower-garden, fields,



## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

orchards formed the domain that was peaceful and solitary to the point of melancholy.

The fecund Norman landscape was monotonous if agreeable. Agriculture was the sole occupation of this part of the province Calvados, which took its name, according to a fantastic legend, from a vessel of the Invincible Armada, the *Salvador*, that foundered on the reefs on the coast at Asnelles. The air was humid, frequent sea winds twisted the trees and stripped the foliage, and there were long periods of rain, grey clouds, and a chill light without brilliancy.

The Manor house consisted of a vestibule, coldly paved with flags, a large kitchen with open joists overhead, a huge pent-house chimney supported by large corbels, a wainscoted dining-room and a wide stairway leading to the first floor, which consisted of three chambers and three closets. The furniture was heavy, old-fashioned, and designed entirely for use; there were no luxuries, but as many comforts as the age afforded in the way of warmth, food, service. There were a few books, a few pictures, one or two musical instruments, respectable hangings, drapery and silver, and the walls were wainscoted or papered, but apart from these refinements it was a life without polish, without amusement, without leisure. It was also, because of constant poverty and the galling contrast between means and pretensions, a life without gaiety.

M. de Corday d'Armont was the third son of M. de Corday de Cauvigny, from whom he had received Armont as his portion. A poor portion the young man had always considered it, and the difference between his birth and his revenues had galled him ever since he had left the College of Beaumont-en-Auge at Pont

l'Evêque, where he had been educated. In character and intellect he was mediocre, in his tastes simple, ordinary in his opinions, depressed by the struggle to bring up a family on an income that never exceeded fifteen hundred *livres*. M. de Corday d'Armont was a true Norman in appearance, tall, robust, inclined to stoutness, with small, regular features and bright colouring between red and gold.

He lived on a farm entitled Bois on this estate of his father, Mesnil-Imbert, and rented the lands of Ronceray, where he grazed cattle and tilled the land, not disdaining himself to assist in the manual labour.

This farm, to which he returned with his infant daughter in the summer of 1768, was built round a courtyard planted with fruit-trees and flanked by a flower-garden. Here, there was even less of luxury than in the Manor house—the walls were papered, there was a salon in the *rez-de-chaussée*.

The neighbouring estate of Glatigny, distant seven hundred metres from the *ferme du Bois*, was owned by an elder branch of the family of Corday; there had been a lordly house there since the sixth century and the *château* had belonged to the Corday family since 1400. It was a handsome building, surrounded by a moat crossed by wooden bridges, built with two wings and surmounted by a very high tiled roof, a *grande allée* led to the entrance and another long avenue of poplar trees showed the distant spire of Saint-Gervais-les-Sablons. This lonely Manor house had dignity and grace; it was furnished with refinement, if not with elegance, but when beaten upon by the sea storms of autumn that gave all the trees a landward twist, or under the grey skies and heavy rains of

winter, it was melancholy of aspect.

The Cordays were beloved for their pure Norman birth, their dignified, austere life, their kindness to their dependants. They, like the peasantry, languished under the decaying feudal system; there was little to be made from the land, but "there was always bread in the *château*" for those in need.

Nor had their poverty blemished the reputation of these *gentilhommes* in the eyes of their neighbours; a legend that gave them royal blood embellished their race; a Mlle. de Chayot, descended from the *Bailleul* (John Balliol, King of Scotland), had married a Corday; she claimed the gift of healing the King's evil.

\* \* \* \* \*

Between these two estates of Mesnil-Imbert and Glatigny and the lands he had hired at Ronceray, M. Corday d'Armont passed his time and watched his children grow up. Jacqueline-Eleonore was born soon after her sister; she was gentle, and either from some congenital defect or from the results of an accident, slightly hunch-backed. Though the *ferme du Bois* was their usual lodging, the children were free of the two Manor houses, Glatigny and Mesnil-Imbert; the two boys were soon sent to school in order to prepare for the sole career that seemed suited to their birth and their poverty; their harassed father strained his resources to send them to the *Ecole Militaire*. The two little girls grew up in solitude, knowing only their relations, the servants and labourers who toiled about them. At Bois they had a little closet lined by a common blue paper; at Mesnil-Imbert, where they

often stayed, Marie-Anne-Charlotte had a cabinet to herself austerey furnished with plain bed, chairs, table and mirror; the walls were not even white-washed but showed rough brick; an oak chest held the child's few clothes; close by was a small room fitted up as an oratory, where Madame de Corday trained her infant daughters to offer up their prayers at a humble altar. The window looked out on an avenue of elms stretching towards a wood, and the rude little chamber, austere as a nun's cell, was filled by the sounds of the winds that constantly troubled the trees and whistled through the uncarpeted, untapestried rooms.

Sometimes, as they grew older, the children would be taken on holy days to Glatigny to enjoy a simple festival, which would be announced by the sound of trumpets echoing oddly across the lonely fields. On these rare occasions the tired mother, always gracious and well-bred, would find fresh muslin kerchiefs for her daughters and ribbons for their hair, and they would dance gaily in the *salon* of the old *château*, that was handsomely adorned by sculptured woodwork. M. de Corday de Cauvigny was very fond of his grandchildren, who were also caressed and petted by Marjotte (Fanchon Marjot), the faithful servant of the *château*, and the little girls, who had no companions of their own age and no amusements, grew to like life better in their grandfather's houses, Glatigny or Mesnil-Imbert, than in the pinched, quiet establishment of their parents at the *ferme du Bois*.

M. de Corday d'Armont was devoted to his frail wife—their neighbours, in the classic taste of the moment, named them Philemon and Baucis. No

quarrels, no differences of opinion, no humours, disturbed this simple home. It was, however, darkened by bitter care, by lack of all diversion, by a sense of grievance, at least on the part of the man. He resented his lot as third son, the system whereby he had to live like a gentleman on a farmer's earnings, his inherited instincts warred with his circumstances. He had to toil hard, often holding the plough himself and, though he declared agriculture to be the most honourable of callings, he was galled by the inability to live like the nobleman he felt himself to be. His gloom and his discontent darkened his home and disturbed the expanding spirits of his daughters. M. de Corday d'Armont was no philosopher and had been educated above his position, or he would have found his Norman life not so ill. The real sting of poverty lies with the town dweller or the homeless wanderer; this man owned land, a house, had work for every day to his hand, dealt directly with the fruits of the earth, had men and animals at his command, neighbours to respect him, relations to whom to turn at need, a comfortable bed, a warm hearth, a loving wife and blooming children. In brief, he could have enjoyed the life of classic dignity then becoming so fashionable with many philosophers—the "back to nature" existence that many firmly held would be the salvation of mankind. But M. de Corday was neither genial, jovial, nor *philosophe*; he brought the anxiety of the town to the country. The education of his sons meant heavy expense, he lived beyond his means and chafed at his inadequacy. In vain he toiled among his crops and beasts, in vain his wife laboured to contrive and save in the household; there was never enough. Discon-

tent was in the French air; some of the numerous books and pamphlets that voiced the complaints of the intellectuals found their way to the Calvados and on to the shelves at Mesnil-Imbert, beside the works of Corneille and Plutarch. M. de Corday d'Armont read and brooded over the *Contrat Social*, by J. J. Rousseau, the *Philosophe des Deux Indes*, by the *abbé* Raynal, and his disappointment increased. Not only was everything wrong with France, but he was the victim of other men's blunders; he began to inveigh against the feudal system to which he felt he had been sacrificed and became more and more self-centred and sombre.

\* \* \* \* \*

The life that so fretted the father pleased the daughters; monotonous though it might appear to townsfolk, it was to the country-bred, lonely children, full of interest, even of excitement. They had everything that the city dweller misses; the rhythm of nature, blotted out in cities, was clearly discernible to them; they marked the four clear seasons, the budding of spring, the flowering of summer, the fruitage of autumn, the pause of winter; close to the earth, they were familiar with the processes of growth; they saw the seed planted from which their food would come. Bread to them was not something bought in a shop; they watched the grain ground, the flour mixed, the loaves shaped and baked in the great *fournil*. They gathered the fruits that appeared at their simple board on dishes of Norman pottery, they helped their mother and the maid make butter and cheese, skim the cream and set the milk in wide-mouthed crocks. They

roamed unchecked over their own land when the hawthorn whitened the hedges and sweetened the air, they rode home behind the stout Norman horses bringing in haysel and harvest.

Their toys were the chestnuts that came sliding through the leaves on the old trees near Mesnil-Imbert, the acorns found beneath the oaks in the great avenue, the twisted sticks to be picked up after a night of storm, the sedge grasses to be found round the Manor house pond.

The winters were long. When the snow fell the children would help the servants sweep it away from the road that connected Glatigny and Mesnil-Imbert; when the cold was intense they would slide on the pond, throw balls in the bare garden or collect the scarlet berries from the hedges. There were other days when there was neither snow, frost, nor storm, but only a long greyness of rain and steady wind, and when perhaps for weeks there would be no blue sky, no ray of sun, no relief from the sougning of the dripping boughs, the whistling of the wind in the chimney corner, the slash of the rain-drops on the small windows of the farm-house.

The little girls were not idle during the leaden, windy weather when the mornings were dark and the evenings short; under the guidance of their mother they learned to sew, to memorise the prayers in the Psalter, the Holy Hours, the beads on the rosary. They drew from her the fervour of a simple faith, as from Nature they learned the changeless sequence of the seasons; she taught them the manners of gentlefolk and the arts of the housewife; they were instructed in the history of France, and in particular that of

Normandy and the exploits of the House of Corday, which had given a captain to the campaigns of Robert Guiscard in Sicily and an officer to the household of the Duc de Bourgogne.

Madame de Corday d'Armont knew all the folk-tales of Normandy, and seated by the winter fire burning beneath the huge cowl, related these together with legends of the saints and the Virgin.

The lamps and candles never burnt very long; oil and tallow had to be hoarded; in their chill bedrooms, with the rain and wind without, under the rough clean sheets and home-spun coverlets, the little girls had many hours in which to dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

The elder child grew robust and beautiful; nourished by pure food, inured to the hardships of poverty, she showed, in her fine limbs and well-cut features, her healthy gallant race. Her spirits were high, her gaiety almost turbulent; she preferred the company of her brothers when they were home on holidays to that of her fragile mother and her delicate sister. She liked to go with the peasants when they worked in the fields and orchards, her arms bare, her neck open, clad in a plain gown of red linen with the masses of brilliant, blond hair hanging free on her shoulders. She was not, however, rough or rude, her air was well-bred, her manners modest, and though she rejoiced so much in the active life of the countryside and possessed a witty humour, a fund of laughter and gaiety, she also liked solitude, to muse by herself in the shade of some lonely tree at midday, to sit alone by the pond and watch the clouds mirrored behind



her own face in the water, or to hide herself in some remote corner of granary or barn.

There was much besides Nature with which she could feed her dreams; a desk once used by Pierre Corneille was treasured in the Manor house of Mesnil-Imbert, and before she could read the antique stories he used as his material, they were familiar to her from the lips of her parents. Rome and Sparta were words as familiar to her as Calvados and Orne; the heroes and the actions of antiquity were woven into the incidents of her daily life to form one ineffaceable impression. Hers was the usual experience of the lonely, imaginative child—her dreams, fed by tales and coloured by enthusiasms fostered in silence, blended with the familiar round of her material existence until the impression of mingled truth and fantasy became ineffaceable. The smell of new bread baking in the great ovens, the half-sickly perfume of the hawthorn blossom, the aroma of ripe fruit at the apple harvest, the scent of burning autumn leaves, of the byre, of the pails of fresh milk, were all associated in her mind, and without any sense of incongruity, with the martial figures of noble Romans, the severe outlines of Spartan heroes.

Her education did not, as is so often the case, obscure these early dreams or half-efface these early tendencies. Her uncle, the *abbé* Charles Amédée de Corday, who was *curé* of Vicques in the Calvados, was given this chargewhen Marie-Anne-Charlotte outgrew her mother's cares, and he developed the child's mind and heart along the lines she had already chosen for herself. He taught her to read from the stately lines of Pierre Corneille, he encouraged her to admire those

antique virtues praised by the great dramatist, which she already by instinct cherished. The priest found nothing strange in inculcating a passionate acceptance of pagan standards of heroism alongside a simple acceptance of Christianity. He was a rich man, of high principles, giving much in charity, akin to his pupil in independence and loftiness of character. He lived in the house attached to the *chapelle Saint-Roch*, near Vicquette, and often sent his carriage and pair to fetch his niece to her lessons. In the dignified austerity of his study, with the crucifix on the plain walls, and copies of the classics in worn calf on the shelves, he instilled nobility of conduct, fearlessness, grandeur of soul, self-sacrifice and exalted piety into the receptive mind of the eager child. These ideals suited her nature as glove fits hand; she had to the full that glow of generous enthusiasm for greatness not uncommon in extreme youth, but which, instead of being fostered is usually overlaid and even destroyed by contact with the world. But Mlle. de Corday d'Armont had no one to disturb her ingenuous passion for sublimity and heroism. It was, indeed, encouraged by her austere life, the noble outline of her country spread undefaced before her, the direct teaching of the unworldly priest, even by the mournful complaints of her father lamenting the wrongs that he unjustly suffered.

The child began to dream of herself as devoted to some great self-sacrifice, some splendid abnegation, some tremendous service to a high ideal. She mused over heroism as some girls muse over love; she felt in herself the pride, the courage, the fortitude necessary to the accomplishment of a famous deed. So exactly

did the tragedies of Corneille suit her temper, that she exclaimed: "I am of the race of the Emilias and the Cinnas!"

She expanded intellectually with great rapidity; her ideas became early set; no one had much influence over her once her mind was decided; the Norman independence defended the Norman mysticism with a masculine energy and a remarkable eloquence. She early showed that quick irony, that keen sense of humour often found with saintliness. Saintliness indeed soon became associated with Mlle. de Corday d'Armont; she was named "*une sainte personne*." Her reading of Corneille and Plutarch, her dreams of the simple age of heroism, did not interfere with her cheerful and dutiful conduct at home. She worked willingly at her household tasks and tended affectionately the fast-failing mother who with every month was less able to exert her feeble strength.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1782, when Marie-Anne-Charlotte was twelve years old, her childhood, which had not been without pleasure and gaiety, and which had known a healthy freedom and a beautiful background, came to an end. M. de Corday d'Armont, with the petulant energy of a weak man forcing his character, brought a lawsuit against two of his brothers-in-law. This was a desperate attempt to retrieve his fortunes sinking under the expense of the two youths at College. The life at Mesnil-Imbert and the *ferme du Bois* was given up and the family removed to Caen. The unhappy father's sole hope was a successful termination to his law case.

He had, indeed, chosen the shadow for the substance; had he decided to bring up his sons as farmers his daughters as farmers' wives, he might have secured a pleasant, care-free, if humble existence; but he was unable to forget his noble birth and so sank deeper into the shifts and humiliations of genteel poverty.

\* \* \* \* \*

Caen, the ancient capital of Calvados and situate on the Orne sixteen kilometres from the coast, was a town of sufficient elegance and culture to be named the Norman Athens. There was a University, several splendid churches, abbeys and convents, many learned societies, and the handsome streets were lined by the *hôtels* of the Norman nobility; it was also a garrison town. These proud and reserved people, rigid with the prejudices of their classes, lived among themselves and gave to the old town a sad and dull air. Most of the *hôtels* had black marble slabs at the doors which bore the names of aristocratic owners, too proud to live on their estates, too insignificant to venture to Paris, rich enough, from the labours of the peasantry, to live in luxury that bred idle men and insolent women. Between this class and that of the despised and servile *bourgeoisie* were the money-lenders, the bankers, all the dealers in finance who sucked the blood of *la haute noblesse*, as they sucked that of the peasantry. The *château* of William the Conqueror and the numerous massive churches of Norman architecture connected this town of select provincial snobbery with a bold and stormy past, while several houses with carved and sculptured wooden façades bore witness to the fantastic and opulent taste of the Renais-

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

sance. The fine and sober beauty of the bell-tower of Saint Pierre, of the thirteenth century, gave distinction to the sombre outline of the town. M. de Corday d'Armont had nothing to do with the haughty and wealthy society of Caen to which by birth he belonged; he rented a small house of the humblest description at the *Buttes de Saint-Gilles*, near the famous *abbaye-aux-dames* or *de la Trinité* and the ancient church of *Saint-Gilles* situate on the limits of the town on the south-east.

The *abbaye-aux-dames*, a magnificent building in the Romanesque style, was founded by Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror, in expiation of the irregularity of her marriage; in repentance for the same fault her husband had raised at Caen the *abbaye-aux-hommes* and the church of *Saint-Etienne*. The work of the pious Queen had been damaged in the Hundred Years' War and restored in the reign of Louis XIV, but the heavy and impressive towers, the magnificent porch, the graceful *clocher*, retained their pristine aspect of sombre splendour. The body of Matilda still rested under the marble slab in the choir where it had been placed in 1083, and the black-robed nuns with the white band and gimp of the order of *Saint Benoît* still moved in dignified peace through the cloisters. One portion of the *abbaye* had been reconstructed in 1704 and served as a *hôtel-Dieu*; beyond was the old convent park which contained a labyrinth or maze of horn-beam hedges; in the centre of this was a hillock that commanded an excellent view of Caen. An *allée* of elms shaded the walls of the *abbaye*, so that although the life was confined and dull compared to that of Mesnil-Imbert, the poor home of M. de Corday

d'Armont was situate in a position ennobled by the grandeur of the convent and made pleasant by the park and trees. *Saint-Gilles* was another ancient building that adorned the neighbourhood; it was a humble church, old, neglected, which served the poor people; bread was given away every Sunday morning after Mass.

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The family of de Corday d'Armont had few friends in Caen and their poverty was more keenly felt in the proud town than it had been on their own lands. No longer could Marie-Anne-Charlotte run free in her gown of red linen; she and her sister had to sew at little caps, kerchiefs and aprons for themselves in order that they might make a decent appearance; the toils of Madame de Corday d'Armont increased with the melancholy of her husband. No dissension added to their burden; complete love and confidence existed between the parents and their two children; the father, with Norman frugality, would place his slender resources in a drawer accessible to all, often portioning them out, in the presence of his children, for the necessaries of life.

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont lost much of her gaiety and high spirits. She devoted herself with almost fanatic enthusiasm to her domestic duties; this child of fourteen was already inclined to extremes—all she did must be done passionately, pushed to its limits. Her manner was grave and severe; she disclosed herself to none and the hard reality of her life did not interrupt her dreams. She was still surrounded by beauty; if she could no longer muse by the pond in

the home field or in the shade of the old chestnut trees, she could sit under the rich shadow of the arcades of the Roman nave of the *abbaye*, watched by the grimacing masks in the capitals of the columns (which seemed to peep from their world of fantasy at the strange child wrapt in her visions) or worship in the fine Gothic chapel, in the transept, in the holy, lamp-lit gloom.

She was free of the old park and the maze, of the peaceful *allée* of elms; she could hear the singing of the choirs, the praises of the nuns, the sombre harmonies of the organ, and, when venturing with her mother down the elegant streets, she could hear from window or garden the sound of clavecin or lute, violin or harp, playing the melodies of Haydn or Mozart, Gluck or Lully. Often her uncle, the good *abbé*, came over to Caen to examine her in her studies. There was also, for the thoughtful and watchful child, curious aspects of the great world to be noted in Caen, people and things she had never seen before; the smart officers, powdered and frizzed, the young students, the old professors in robe and gown, the inns where travellers stayed, the shops that showed Parisian novelties, the fashionably dressed women in their carriages with their lackeys and lap-dogs. Mlle. de Corday d'Armont noted this modern life as she saw it from the outside and shrank the deeper into her dreams and pored the longer over her tales of antique heroism.

Books, pamphlets, newspapers were more easily available in Caen than they had been in Mesnil-Imbert. The young girl heard her father discussing the faults and troubles of the government, the

suggested remedies of the intellectuals; his own bitterness coloured his comments on the state of the country.

In 1774, when Marie-Anne-Charlotte was enjoying her gay infancy, the age of cynical frivolity had come to an end with the death of Louis XV, who had said: "Bah, the crazy old machine will last my time, and who comes after must take care of himself." His successor, Louis XVI, blundered forward, like a man who has given the reins to fate; his ministers, Maurepas, Malesherbes, Turgot, set themselves to make the best of the disordered finances of a country without a constitution.

M. de Corday d'Armont discussed with avidity the proposals of the government to abolish monopolies, introduce free trade and land taxes; he keenly noted their failure before the opposition of clergy and nobility, and the rise of Necker, a Swiss banker, to be chief minister—Necker, a commoner and a Protestant, detested by all but the lower classes, whose reforms raised a clamour throughout France. The poor Norman *gentilhomme* also read many of the republican and atheistical books then flooding the country. The axioms of Locke and Montesquieu filtering through J. J. Rousseau, the materialism of Condillac and Helvetius, the infidel opinions of Voltaire, the new and startling Republic founded in North America, all the catchwords of the *philosophes* and the half-unintelligible jargon of their followers were discussed in the poor home in the shade of the ancient *abbaye* which seemed to stand as a permanent memorial of a changeless faith and an unshakable government.



## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

The fall of the Necker ministry and the reactionary policy of M. de Calonne, with his vast loans raised to conciliate the Queen, the Princes and the nobility, filled M. de Corday d'Armont with mingled excitement and apprehension. Where was he, poor overburdened gentleman, to find his count in all this confusion? He had no fixed political ideas, he only knew that there was something very wrong with a condition of affairs that kept a man of his blood and rank in poverty.

His eldest daughter marked his bitter comments, his weak complaints, and she searched the writings of the *philosophes* for an answer to these puzzles of mankind's rights and wrongs.

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A more personal grief soon clouded the Norman gentleman's vexation with his affairs; his wife failed rapidly in health and he was unable to procure for her the assistance he wished. The illness of the mother, the anguish of the father, strongly affected the elder daughter; she was not aware what was the burden under which her mother was sinking, but she saw, clearly enough, a human tragedy evolving in her poor home. Her fortitude was remarkable; she deliberately trained herself to endure suffering in silence. One of her few friends, Mlle. de Loyer, once met her dragging herself along the walls by the *abbaye*, her face covered with blood, half-fainting from pain and shock. She had fallen in leaving the church, but refused to admit that she was hurt and smiled at her frightened mother, who exclaimed:

"Ah, this poor child is too hard on herself! She

never complains and I have to guess when she is ill—she never tells me!”

This friend noted that the grave child was “*douce, calme, douée d’une raison au-dessus de son âge*”—industrious and thoughtful, also “*une jeune personne accomplie*.”

Mlle. de Corday d’Armont soon had need of all her precocious energy. Birth and death met in the humble house, darkened by privation; Madame de Corday d’Armont died in giving to the world a third daughter who soon followed her to the grave. In this home, too modest even for the decencies of life to be observed, the child saw, at first hand, the rituals of the entering and leaving of life, the hustle of the midwife, the solemnity of the undertaker, the cradle and the *pompes funèbres* in one sad scene. She saw her mother’s face, hollowed by anxiety and fatigue, stiffen into rigidity; she heard the complaints of the new-born infant fading into perpetual silence; she observed the useless, the almost guilty grief of the father, humiliated by his poverty. Her shy, half-aware maidenhood was shocked; she withdrew her secret soul even further into those sanctuaries inhabited by her phantom heroes and heroines.

The little household had been dealt a shattering blow; grief and gloom descended darkly on the widowed father, on the little girls in their cheap black gowns; the vague revolt of the man against his destiny was heightened by his loss; the gravity of the children increased as they realised their unfortunate portion, their disasters and their helplessness. The elder was true to her ideals, she tried to be a mother to the delicate Jacqueline-Eléonore, a housekeeper to her

father. She undertook, with sweetness and energy, the most menial tasks, filling not only the place of the dead mother, but of the servant they could not afford.

M. de Corday d'Armont was baffled; his lawsuit dragged on, his lands brought him a poor return, his heavy expenses continued. And in the background was France, putting a thousand questions to herself as she awoke, with convulsive heavings, from what seemed centuries of sleep. Before his poor hearth, with his helpless little girls beside him, the unhappy man pored over those specimens of the infidel and democratic writings that came his way; was there any help for him in the teachings of the intellectuals, the rebels, the *philosophes*?

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Until the eighteenth century the governments of peoples were almost entirely decided by powerful men of action, or by able intriguers. When force ruled and ignorance obeyed, the rôle of theorist was useless and dangerous, nor was the power of the press sufficient to make it worth while to endeavour to influence opinion through books. With the weakening of tyrannies, with the fading of superstition and the spread of the printing press, with a rapidly growing discontent and wonder as to this and that among all classes, came the men-of-letters, the self-styled philosophers who began to focus and voice the popular grievances, to question institutions sacred and quasi-sacred, to criticise the privileged classes and to compassionate the serf, the peasant, the little townsmen. What, asked these bold speculators, is the best form of government? What is the nature of the con-

tract between ruler and people? What concern has the church with the state, or either with ethics or a man's private conscience? How can the rapacity of the clergy and the nobility, their exemption from taxation, their idle lives, be justified? Of what use are the laws that leave a large portion of the nation in a state of hopeless misery?

These and other questions, equally pertinent, equally disturbing, at first severely censured, gradually spreading, began to occupy all thinking men in France. Voltaire and d'Alembert, Condillac, Fontenelle, Diderot, all the authors of the *Encyclopædia*, Montesquieu with his famous *Esprit des Lois*, all had, despite the efforts of outraged authority, a considerable vogue among all classes. These writers were none of them men of action. As soldiers, as politicians, as administrators or organisers of any kind they would have been failures. They lacked all experience of public affairs, many of their theories were vague, unworkable, the whims of amateurs. But they possessed the perilous gift of powerful, vivid pens, the very least of them were accomplished journalists. They saw the palpable injustices, cruelties, hypocrisies, follies of the social and religious systems under which they lived, and they pointed them out with every resource of literary art. Who would fail to be impressed by an obvious truth, presented with eloquence, fire and wit? The man who voices a general grievance is sure of a wide hearing from those made inarticulate by weakness. The French people whom the *philosophes* addressed were no worse off than their ancestors of a hundred years before; but when they found indignant complaints in the air they were ready to applaud

vigorously and to bring out their personal grievances.

These men-of-letters were mostly republican and infidel. They suggested a sweeping away of decaying institutions, the Church, the Monarchy, the Feudal system, the privileges of clerics and nobles. They were not so ready with practical, constructive criticism; their ideals appeared to be the dim Republics of Greece and Rome, the England of Locke, Sydney, Cromwell, and later, the United States of Benjamin Franklin and Washington. The consequence of these brilliant discontents, these paper reforms, founded on such genuine wrongs, was that the public became agitated by a thousand glittering prospects without knowing how to put one into practice.

Most beloved, most dangerous, and most gifted of the writers who fascinated, alarmed and roused France, was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He had died ten years before the de Corday d'Armont family came to Caen, but his writings were only beginning to filter from the intellectuals to the people, with whom they were to enjoy for so long a sensational popularity and to have an unprecedented influence.

It is impossible to proceed with the study of the development of Mlle. de Corday d'Armont without briefly considering J. J. Rousseau, who together with the *abbé* Raynal, Pierre Corneille, the Old Testament and Plutarch, was her guide in her extraordinary career.

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This son of the Swiss watchmaker was one of the most remarkable men of a remarkable age; he stood at the source of many modern tendencies and it is often

disputed whether or no he still has influence on modern thought. At least, even if the works that once sent a nation frantic are rarely read save for academic purposes, many of his ideas which seemed so original and startling to his contemporaries have been incorporated in present schools of thought. Not only were these ideas in themselves seductive, but J. J. Rousseau possessed the immense advantage of being able to clothe them in clear, attractive and passionate language. His novel, *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, was eminently successful in conveying that luscious romantic atmosphere, half-sensuous, half-sentimental, that enables the sensitive, refined reader to indulge in highly-coloured, amorous emotionalism under the guise of a tribute to virtue. J. J. Rousseau had caught the trick from Richardson; the lachrymose story of Julie, like the mournful tale of Clarissa Harlowe, owed its frenzied popularity to the adroit handling of the sex element. Thousands of women, when reading these tempting pages, saw themselves pursued, besieged, languished over, captured while preserving all the flattering bloom of chastity.

No less popular was *Emile*, where a new theory of education was expounded with a grace and fervour which started a fashion that lasted for years; while the *Social Contract* owed much of its immense influence to the fact that it contained ideas and theories that people of the most diverse opinions could applaud. J. J. Rousseau was a theorist, a failure in all his personal relationships, ill from birth with a most distressing complaint that drove him out of society, and ended in partial insanity and persecution mania, an hysterical neurotic, and in the early

part of his life at least, a vagabond and a scoundrel. He yet was able, in the few books he left behind, to influence most profoundly a whole generation and to leave his name as a challenge and an authority on the lips of numberless men of various beliefs who had very little idea of what the famous philosopher had written and no clear conception of his theories or ideals. J. J. Rousseau's philosophy was indeed difficult to define; many of his doctrines were not original, he was a disciple of Montesquieu and owed much to Locke; he himself admitted that he could see separate truths, but could not combine them into a satisfactory whole. He was timid, anti-revolutionary, prepared to accept Monarchy; many of his famous *dicta*, such as "*L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers*," which became a catch-phrase, are manifestly false, and his persistent sentimentalism, so sharply in contrast with the outlook of his predecessors, Voltaire, Condillac, Fontenelle, enervated all he wrote and tainted all he taught.

To what then did he owe his unparalleled popularity, the vast numbers of his enthusiastic disciples? First, perhaps, to his complete sincerity. Though Rousseau largely lived in a self-created world as far as his own personal relationships were concerned, while even many of the statements in *Confessions* are suspect, and he could be deceived to the point of hallucination (as in the affair with David Hume), yet in his attitude towards society he was able to detach himself completely, to see the condition of mankind with brilliant clarity and to comment on it with passionate sincerity. Rousseau had none of the rather superficial cynicism, the classic calm, the neat irony of the *philosophes*;

humanity to him was not a matter for witty comment, hardly for moral indignation, but for tears.

This manifest sincerity had a universal appeal; none of Rousseau's readers, whatever his or her intelligence or circumstances, could fear that he was writing for effect, for fame, for money, or indeed otherwise than from his heart. Rousseau was also a visionary and an idealist, and these qualities strike in a most powerful fashion to the secret depths of all sensitive, suffering, or discontented hearts. Though he confessed, himself, to a certain inability to put together all the diverse theories he evolved so as to form a complete scheme for the betterment of mankind, yet he was no dreamy builder of fanciful Utopias. In the *Contrat Social* he suggested reforms, pointed out defects in existing institutions, and advised remedies with convincing clarity and judgment; in the *Pologne* he drew up an elaborate and detailed scheme for the working of a model state. It was easy for his readers to believe that it was possible to put into practice all these ideas in the new states being organised in Europe, and in the New World, notably in North America. There was nothing in Rousseau's doctrines to shock the orderly, the decent, the timid. He foresaw and dreaded a revolution in France; he was neither an anarchist nor an infidel; he advocated nothing violent, and that safe compromise between a democracy and tyranny, the constitutional Monarchy was, in the *Contrat Social*, his choice of government. But doubtless his strongest appeal, the main cause of his great popularity, was his direct attack upon the warmest sentiments of the heart. He believed in the moral law, the essential goodness of mankind; that is, he argued that a



universal happiness might be obtained by basing the law, the linch-pin of the State, upon morality and goodness—these being defined according to Christian ethics. Coincident with this principle ran that of “back to nature.” Rousseau himself said, with some peevishness, that this was not to be interpreted as meaning a life in a desert or a wilderness, or a casting aside of all the advantages of civilisation. It meant, rather, a protest against the evil influences of cities, the corruption of courts and bourses, an escape from the endless complications of intrigues for place, power and money, the meannesses, vices, despairs and disasters inseparable from a competitive struggle for existence. Rousseau thought that the greatest happiness for mankind lay in family life, in close contact with the earth, in simplicity of manners, in modest desires, in rural surroundings.

This was a startling doctrine for eighteenth-century France. For generations the land had been despised, worked by the lowest class, who were treated virtually as slaves, while the middle classes crowded into commerce and the nobility clustered round the King, abandoning their estates for the cities, where they intrigued to obtain some State-paid position. Only here and there did a gentleman live on his land, and usually then, like M. de Corday d’Armont, he regarded his lot with bitterness and struggled to get his sons away from the earth that had bred them.

“Back to nature” became, in theory at least, increasingly popular in the years following the death of Rousseau (1778). Everyone could understand it; with equal poignancy it appealed to the failures, the poverty-stricken, the idealists, the lonely and the

fanciful. Here was none of the difficulty and dryness of philosophy or economics or politics—all was reduced to the simple terms of family life; the nerve of the State was to be found not in Kings, nobles or parliaments, but on the humble hearths of the people. It seemed of such a seductive simplicity, this picture of domestic bliss founded on virtue, where all was tender and noble, where the general goodness of man triumphed over all obstacles, where the children ran free, lived austere and grew up full of kindness and compassion, where the father looked after the land, the mother after the house, and all was reduced to such simplicity that no difficulties could arise. The country responded to the sentimental appeal, to the idealism, the apparent common sense. Rousseau roused a need for tenderness, a longing for domestic joys, for virtuous and languishing love, for self-sacrifice. He stirred a nostalgia for the land, not for the land of the park and the garden, the hunt and the *fête champêtre*, but for the land of the field and the orchard, the farm and the cottage, the seed-time and harvest. Added to the attractiveness of his matter was the charm of Rousseau's style; he wrote a vigorous and limpid French, ardent and persuasive. The flaws in his ideas, the faults in his proposals were manifest; even his famous "Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains," which has such an air of startling truth, may be disputed on the ground that man is not born free, he is born helpless. And it is obvious that a national life of classic dignity and simplicity, occupied in tending the kindly fruits of the earth, would not have been possible in eighteenth-century Europe. Rousseau indeed recognised, almost in despair, the difficul-

ties of national reformation. In 1772 he had written, almost as his last words, "*Il n'y a que Dieu qui puisse gouverner le monde, et il faudrait des facultés plus qu'humaines pour gouverner des grandes nations.*" (Pologne.)

He placed his faith, as all reformers must, in the children, in education. He regarded the child (and this seemed an enticing novelty), not as a mere reflex of the parent, but as a powerful and individual force. Starting from Plato's principle that the complete life is only possible in a social organisation arranged to make goodness paramount, he saw in the child the germ of the future realisation of this ideal. The child was to be taught to live a natural life—i.e., one in which all the natural instincts of goodness found full scope, and to take his part in a society which existed solely to co-ordinate and protect these moral principles; the child, too, should early understand patriotism in its widest sense.

*"C'est l'éducation qui doit donner aux âmes la forme nationale, et diriger tellement leurs opinions et leurs goûts, qu'elles soient patriotes par inclination, par passion, par nécessité. Un enfant en ouvrant les yeux doit voir la patrie, et jusqu'à la mort ne doit plus voir qu'elle. Tout vrai républicain suçait avec le lait de sa mère l'amour de sa patrie, c'est-à-dire des lois et de la liberté."* (Pologne.)

Rousseau himself was aware that much of what he taught was vague, or impracticable, or visionary; he even, in his deep sincerity, thought sometimes that it might be false. *"Peut-être tout ceci n'est-il qu'un tas de chimères; mais voilà mes idées. Ce n'est pas ma faute si elles ressemblent si peu à celles des autres*

*hommes, et il n'a pas défendu de moi d'organiser ma tête d'une autre façon."* (*Ibid.*)

Chimeras or no, the ideas of Rousseau gradually spreading from the intellectuals to the main body of the reading public, were accepted by many who did not understand more than their superficial meaning. Rousseau's romanticism and sentimentality appealed to thousands who cared nothing for the moral law or the goodness of man, numberless young women saw themselves as Julie and their lovers as Saint-Preux, numberless ardent reformers and patriots saw themselves overturning the existing order of things in order to carry out Rousseau's ideas on the ruins, numberless mothers and governesses educated their charges in the manner of *Emile*. Some nobles took Rousseau seriously and pondered over his *dicta*, far more made him the plaything of the moment; tears and hermitages, plank beds, the following of a trade, and a lachrymose concern for "the lowest classes" became as fashionable as the *pantin* dolls or the untwisting of braid had been a few years previously. Indeed, every class, every individual, could find in the seductive pages of Rousseau something new, something attractive, something to discuss or to copy. On some natures the ideas of Rousseau acted like a madness, working them up to a frenzy of enthusiasm, blinding them with sublime ideals, dissolving them in tears of tenderness and compassion. The name of the Genevan was on the lips of many self-named disciples whose conduct he would have abhorred; it was used as a rallying cry by parties he would have completely repudiated; his theories became twisted, his meaning misunderstood, his ideals ignored by those who professed to be his

ardent followers. Folly, stupidity, hysteria, the falsity of sentimentality, all advanced themselves with his name. But here and there some sincere and noble soul accepted Rousseau on the terms of sincerity and nobility, rejected Julie, and brooded, without morbidity or egotism, on *Pologne* and the *Contrat Social*. These thinking people perceived that much was wrong with the condition of France. The *philosophes* had opened the eyes of the sensible middle classes to cruelty, injustice, unequal distribution of wealth and taxes, the hypocrisy of the Church, the tyranny of the nobles, the anachronism of the feudal system. Might not the remedy be found in the pages of J. J. Rousseau? It must be remembered, to the credit of those serious-minded people who were dazzled by this extraordinary man, that he was a brilliant genius, and in much, a prophet.

Amiel (writing in 1877) found him "*un ancêtre en tout*," in romantic reverie, where he inspired Chateaubriand, in rustic rambles where he led Töpffer, in literary botany before George Sand, in the cult of nature enlarged upon by Saint-Pierre, in the theory of democracy before the Revolution of 1789. In politics and theology he was the leader of Mirabeau and Renan, in teaching he inspired Pestalozzi, and in the description of Alpine scenery, Saussure; he made music and "confessions" fashionable and created a new French style: "*en somme on peut dire que rien de Rousseau ne s'est perdu et que personne n'a influé plus que lui, sur la Révolution Française . . . et sur le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.*"

Amiel, then, found J. J. Rousseau at the source of many modern tendencies—from ethics to country

walks. George Sand paid an earlier tribute: "*Il m'a transmis, comme à tous les artistes de mon temps, l'amour de la nature, l'enthousiasme du vrai, le mépris de la vie factice et le dégoût des vanités du monde.*"

H. Taine (writing in 1876), who disliked Rousseau, admits the attractiveness of his "*sensibilité délicate et profonde, l'humanité, l'attendrissement, le don des larmes, la faculté d'aimer, la passion de la justice, le sentiment religieux, l'enthousiasme.*"

It is easy to understand that to oppressed, refined, sensitive and noble souls, bewildered by what they saw around them, uneasy as to the future and longing to be of service to humanity, the works of such a writer would be as a Bible, second only to Plutarch's *De viris illustribus*, which seemed to relate the deeds of the heroes of that vanished world which had provided the basis for much of the Genevan's inspiration.

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In 1782, while in Paris, Madame de Genlis was bringing up the children of the *duc d'Orléans* according to *Emile*, Mlle. de Corday d'Armont was beginning, in her sad poverty at Caen, to read the exciting and enticing works of J. J. Rousseau, which exactly suited her expanding mind, already formed by the heroics of Corneille.

The harassed father, to whom the necessity of finding the daily bread made all philosophy vain, soon returned with his daughters to Mesnil-Imbert, while he tried to place the eldest in the establishment for impoverished gentlewomen endowed by Madame de Maintenon at Saint-Cyr.

The little housewife, with her head full of Corneille,

Rousseau and Plutarch, did not fail in childish tenderness to "papa" on his birthday; when she had no means with which to buy a present, she wrote a little verse:

"*Souffrez, tendre papa, que mon zèle devance,  
L'âge où l'on ne connaît ni rime, ni raison,  
J'ai pour bouquet mon cœur, que peut de plus  
l'enfance?  
Le présent quand on s'aime est toujours de saison.'  
Je suis avec tout le respectueux et sincère  
attachement,  
"Marie-Anne-Charlotte."*

The placid, melancholy Norman fields did not look so fair to the young girl as before she had left them to go to Caen. Her laugh was no longer so frequent, nor so joyous; she did not run so freely over the fields or muse so long beside the resting water. This was not only because she was grieving for her mother and had the cares of the little household on her shoulders; it was because her eyes were opened to much that she had not noticed in her gay childhood, the peasantry working like beasts without reward or hope, the struggle to pay the taxes to Church and noble, the *dîme*, the *gabelle*, the misery of the *corvée*, the long labour with rude implements to make the earth yield a living, the stark poverty of the labourer's hut, the shifts of the small gentry's dwelling, her own family's grim effort to maintain caste in face of penury—all these things passed into the soul of the girl. She knew now where the money went that was wrung from a soil too often watered by tears—to support the idle men, the insolent women, the fat tradesmen, the pampered

lackeys whom she had seen in Caen.

Melancholy and indignation coloured her childish musings, but her Norman firmness kept her resigned, silent, even cheerful.

However many political pamphlets M. de Corday d'Armont had read, however little he believed in the stability of the government he despised, he was as eager to attach his children to ancient institutions as if he believed that these would last for ever. Every sacrifice had been made to place the sons in the army; then the daughters must be taken under the wing of the Church.

The application to Saint-Cyr failed. The father used his only weapon, the influence of his rank and connections, and solicited for his girls the advantage of an education at the *abbaye-aux-dames*.

Their aunt, Madame de Louvagny, was a nun in this establishment; she put the case of the two noble and desolate young girls before her friend, the Abbess of the Convent, Madame de Belzunce. She was aided in her petition by another nun, Madame de Pontécoulant, and by particular favour, the demoiselles de Corday d'Armont were accepted on the foundation of Queen Matilda, which allowed maintenance and education to five young girls of high birth but impoverished means.

Thus, at the age of fourteen, Mlle. de Corday d'Armont, with her younger sister Eléonore, entered the magnificent, rigid and sombre *abbaye* as a *pensionnaire*. This made an abrupt break with her former life; the existence of the rustic infant, the anxious little housewife, the earnest pupil of the uncle priest, had come to an end.





T W O

LADIES IN SECLUSION

“Sitôt que les hommes vivent en société il leur faut une religion qui les y maintienne. Jamais peuple n’a subsisté, ni ne subsistera sans religion.”

*J. J. Rousseau, Du Contrat Social, 1772.*

“En général, dans le commencement des sociétés, les femmes sont les premières à se policier. Leur faiblesse même, et leur vie sédentaire, plus occupée de détails variés et de petits soins, leur donnent plutôt ces lumières et cette expérience, ces attachements domestiques qui font les premiers instruments et les liens les plus forts de la sociabilité. Soit que l’ascendant de ce sexe tienne à sa beauté, ou que ce soit un effet particulier de sexe tienne à beauté, ou que ce soit un effet particulier de son assiduité au travail et de son intelligence pour les affaires.”

*L’abbé Raynal.*

*Tome II, Histoire des Indes, 1780.*

THE stately establishment of *l'abbaye aux dames* was conducted with saintly decency and admirable order ; no gossip or scandal had ever attached to the band of devoted women who kept alive the piety of William the Conqueror's wife. They lived in community, but were not an enclosed order ; they took some pupils and they interested themselves in works of charity. The dignified air and well-bred grace of the convent were exemplified by the noble Abbess, Cécile-Geneviève-Emilie de Belzunce de Castelmoran. This lady, then twenty-eight years of age, imposing and delicate in appearance, with large blue eyes, a smiling mouth and long fine hands, undertook to direct the education of the two motherless girls. Beneath her gentle air she was pious, ascetic and severe ; her family were aristocratic, her nephew Henry [*sic*], Vicomte de Belzunce, was afterwards in garrison at Caen, major in the *régiment du Bourbon infanterie*.

Under the guidance of this noble lady the education of Mlle. de Corday d'Armont continued ; she was trained on the lines that had been for long laid down as suitable for gentlewomen, in all the grave and elaborate ritual of her faith, in charitable duties to the poor and the sick, in music, drawing, fine needlework, lace-making. As well as these definite accomplishments the nuns taught those intangible arts and graces that composed, in their opinion, good breeding. The girl, used to poverty and hard work, who had already from her parents learned a gentlewoman's bearing, now was trained in deportment, courtesy, suppleness in her approach to life, a grasp of the technique of

living, the *finesse* of behaviour. If the nuns were aware of any of the signs of the times or understood the epoch in which they lived, they gave no sign of it; they prayed, taught, and went round with their doles of bread and soup as if they were still living in the age of William and Matilda.

The pupils of the *abbaye* were, at this period, four: the two de Corday girls, Mlle. Alexandrine de Forbin and Mlle. de Récorbin. They wore dark blue habits like those of novices, had to obey without discussion, to lead a severe life without excitement and amusement, and to help the nuns in their charitable labours. Mlle. de Forbin was *dévoté*; she was destined to a religious life; her sister Julienne was an Ursuline, her two brothers were in the army. She came of a noble, half-ruined family of Avignon and was related to the Abbess and the Bishop of Marseilles; this Comtesse Alexandrine was the chosen friend of Mlle. de Corday d'Armont.

Among other nuances of conduct taught by the nuns was pride of birth; the four girls understood that they were of the nobility; the two de Corday d'Armont girls who had lived almost like peasants in Mesnil-Imbert, learned that it was of importance to be a de Corday, to have a long pedigree and a coat-of-arms. The four young ladies lived in a perfect accord; their amiable behaviour sprang from goodness of heart, intelligence and fine training, so that no ill-humour, temper, jealousy or spite marred their intercourse.

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The most brilliant and the most difficult of the pupils was Marie-Anne-Charlotte; docile and sweet

as was her disposition, she found it hard to submit to the severe rules of the convent. The liveliness eclipsed by her mother's death returned—she had a quick wit, an ironic turn not always acceptable to the nuns. Her aunt and teacher, Madame de Louvagny, had often to struggle with her on questions that arose during the lessons. The girl had an intense mental activity; she could take nothing on trust—all must be argued and proved. Nor could she resign, on any count, her own convictions. On the contrary, she would defend them with fire and force, taking them always to extremes. The Abbess was alarmed at this independence of spirit, which the girl carried so far as to argue with her Confessor. But as her ideals were all lofty, her instincts all noble, no one was prepared to punish her for the exaltation and enthusiasm with which she pressed her points, or the lively intelligence with which she examined dogmas and traditions. Then her conduct was excellent, her charm of person and of manner so compelling, her piety so warm and orthodox. The *abbé* Boulay, the confessor to the young girls, found Mlle. de Corday d'Armont what those who had watched her childhood had found her to be: "*Une sainte personne.*"

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The young Norman believed in the Church whose rites she so piously followed; there was nothing of the atheist or the heretic in her disposition, which was raised above all these differences and restrictions. She was a mystic.

She had brought her Plutarch, her Corneille into the convent; her reading was not unduly limited, she

was allowed to mingle the exploits of the ancient heroes with the lives of the Saints. Owing to her high character she was permitted, as she grew older, to read J. J. Rousseau (not the romances) and that strange work which affected her so powerfully, the *Histoire Philosophe des deux Indes* by the *abbé* Raynal. Plutarch's *Lives*, which might at this period be termed the intellectuals' handbook, was often between her fingers and always in her mind.

Like many lofty minded women she was delighted in creating something with her hands and took a great pleasure in needlework; she drew her own embroidery designs and was an exquisite lace-maker; she learned to play the clavecin excellently. In her own language she was not accomplished; although she read so much she always spelled incorrectly and made many childish mistakes in putting her sentences together.

Her physical gifts were as abundant as her mental endowments; she developed into "*un vrai soleil*"—her charm was enhanced by her touching modesty, her complete unself-consciousness; she enjoyed a brilliant health which gave her a serenity, a poise and a cheerful common sense that would have been impossible to the feeble, the nervous or the hysterical. Her voice, low and warm, was extremely beautiful and could hardly be heard without emotion.

Her serenity of mind rose from her perfect spiritual, as well as her perfect physical, adjustment; she had the mystic's supreme happiness of feeling at one with God. This conviction of union with the Divine gave her the confidence that some mistook for pride and obstinacy; it was not possible for her complete integrity to betray what she felt to be a sacred truth

for the sake of agreeing with human arguments. She became very devout in her religious observances, showing an exalted fervour that was a perfume rising from her consciousness of the faith whose observances were so closely round her. Everything mediocre being distasteful to her, she strove to raise her religion to sublime heights, she wished to be not only a Christian, but a saint, a martyr; to the rites of the Church she brought the emotional heroism of Corneille, the stoicism of Plutarch's worthies.

Into a little notebook she copied sermons, litanies and prayers with her large, irregular hand, and these lines: "Deliver us always, Lord, from our enemies, we entreat you, by this Sign of the Cross. . . . O, Jesus, I present myself before you with a humble and contrite heart, to recommend to you my last hour and that which must follow it. . . . When my pale and livid cheeks inspire with compassion and terror those who attend me. . . . When my ears, about to be for ever sealed to the voices of men, wait, trembling to hear the word of Judgment pronounced—*Miserere mei.*"

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont could be gay, too; she was the most high-spirited among the pupils and the nuns. On an occasion she fastened some little bells to her garter, which rang as the girls danced together in the *allées* of the old park; the nuns had to chase them and catch them, one by one, before they could discover from where the pretty tinkle came. She loved, too, the company of children; one of these, whom she taught at the age of six to make lace on a pillow, spoke of her long afterwards as "*un ange du bon Dieu.*"

The *vacances* were spent at Mesnil-Imbert, where the two sisters were regular in their attendance at the



parish church and where the elder gathered round her the infants and the poor, inventing games for the first and giving generously, sometimes even to her entire substance, to the second. When she had lived in the *Buttes de Saint-Gilles* she had eaten black bread in order to give the white loaves to charity; any sacrifice afforded her pleasure.

This life of nun, of gentlewoman, of young girl approaching womanhood, lasted nearly seven years. During that period she was most influenced by the books she read, which were more to her than the gentle company of the nuns and her fellow-pupils, more than the environment of the ancient, massive building that enshrined her devotions, more to her than anything she saw or heard about her daily life. This seclusion of seven years was ideal for breeding dreams, for encouraging visions, for forcing a strong imagination back on itself. Mlle. de Corday d'Armont was not fed by romances or tales of love or intrigue; her reading was severe, no novel ever came into her hands; she had not read *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which had disturbed so many feminine hearts. J. J. Rousseau was to her the author of *Contrat Social* and she knew none of the scandals of his miserable life.

Her natural disposition, the circumstances of her upbringing, the subtle influences of her time, above all her reading, turned her thoughts in one direction, that of virtue and strength. A passionate admiration for Sparta and Rome roused in her a secret exaltation that was at the root of her serenity, her gaiety, her piety. She was in love with heroism. Through her adored Corneille, she reached out to antiquity, where she found her ideals realised—the hero combating the

tyrant, the hero dying for the country.

The enthusiasm she felt burnt the stronger for being concealed; she had no *confidante* among these delicate women, with their resignation and their meekness; she knew that the expression of her exaltation would sound strangely among the muted tones of the nuns breaking the silence of the cloisters. Often her musing, her concentration on these heroisms, these ideals, would result in an ecstasy.

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What were these books, these heroes, which so impressed this powerful, simple and noble mind?

Consider first the works of Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) for whom she had, as his descendant, an almost superstitious reverence. This connection gave her great prestige at the Convent, heightened by the fact that her uncle (one-eyed like her mother) was a Chevalier de Saint-Louis—a de Corday d'Armont truly shone with such embellishments.

How easily these famous dramas which she never saw acted, but from which she drew such fervent inspiration, might seem to another eye dull, insipid, almost absurd.

Neither the plots nor the characters of Pierre Corneille's plays bear any relation to any life that could ever have been lived anywhere. The elimination of all commonplaces, of all incidents in the minor key, of all humble details, leaves nothing but inhuman figures declaiming sentiments that only rarely and intermittently stir the human heart. There are no half-shades in the studies of the tyrant, the hero, the wicked woman, the heroine—there is no relief from

emotional crisis; the protagonists leap from one peak of passion to another; there is always some mighty decision in debate. Not a single gleam of irony, of wit, of true pathos, lightens the long outbursts of eloquence with which these metallic figures express their woes, their indignations, their resolutions. They cannot be said to be characters, they are embodied virtues and vices, they settle no problems, they open no new vistas, they are quite incompatible with any existence of any human being.

What matter? They are grand, they have the heroic outline, they are raised above the petty needs of everyday; they declaim against tyranny, against wrong, against injustice; the heroes are ready, eager for sacrifice, for liberty, for the country, *i.e.*, the common weal. And all this impossible enthusiasm of antique virtue is couched in splendid diction, which rolls seductively off the tongue and fascinates the ear, as the elevation, dignity and grandeur of the sentiment fascinate the mind. Artificial, impossible it may be, even irritating or ridiculous in its refusal to recognise the real measure of humanity, but it is sublime and like fire to tinder when represented to a heart of noble mould.

"To the influence of the great Corneille," said Napoléon I, "France owes some of her grandest actions; tragedy elevates the human soul, fires the heart with a noble passion and forms men into heroes. I would have made him a Prince."

With with delight, then, did Mlle. de Corday d'Armont, in the seclusion of her austere chamber, in the secrecy of the hornbeam labyrinth, pore over *Cinna*, *Le Cid*, *Horace* or *Polyeucte*, with what noble pleasure did her beautiful lips form such energetic

passages as these from her favourite drama of *Cinna*:

*"Plus le péril est grand, plus doux en est le fruit,  
La vertu nous y jette, et la gloire le suit."*

This sentiment exactly suited her own desire for self-sacrifice, for abnegation, as did this, put into the mouth of *Emilie*, a stern and patriotic heroine:

*"Meurs, s'il y faut mourir, en citoyen romain.  
Et par un beau trépas couronne un beau dessein."*

*"En citoyen romain."* This term might be said to sum up the desires of many ardent souls in the days that Mlle. de Corday d'Armont mused in the *abbaye-aux-dames*; the intellectuals were classic mad. J. J. Rousseau referred his disciples back to Sparta and Rome, and Plutarch was in everyone's hands, as if it had been a guide book to daily life. People talked, wrote and thought about antiquity; in some it became a pose, an intolerable affectation, in most it prevented a clear understanding of the problems of the moment. The words republic — liberty — sacrifice — heroism, excited and confused the ardent spirits who dreamed of reforming France, the names of Cinna, the grandson of Pompey, who conspired against Augustus to avenge the murdered father of Emilia, of Mucius Scaevola, who thrust his hand into the brazier full of fire in front of Porsenna, of Marcus Curtius who leaped into the gulf to save the city, which recalled the two Roman Consuls, father and son, who rushed on death to appease the gods and gain the victory for their country, of Brutus, the Roman father, who sacrificed his son to the laws; of Manlius, the

Roman David, who slew the gigantic Gaul and put to death his successful but disobedient son—these names were on everyone's lips, as if they belonged to living people; these actions were quoted, as if these were profitable examples to consider in the France of the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

But the name that was most often repeated, which became a charm, a watchword, a symbol, an invocation, was that of Marcus Brutus, who slew his friend and benefactor in order to secure the liberty of Rome. Marcus Brutus, who was the fashion and the god of the moment was also, before even *Cinna* or *Rodriguez*, the first hero of Mlle. de Corday d'Armont's admiration.

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A book that had an equal value in her eyes with J. J. Rousseau, with Corneille, with Plutarch, was an extraordinary work which contained sentiment and heroism, tenderness and grandeur, a passion for liberty, a hatred of tyranny and slavery and a high admiration for Greece and Rome.

This was a work in ten volumes ponderously entitled *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, by Guillaume-Thomas Raynal and several collaborators. So immensely popular had this work proved that it had run into edition after edition and had been translated into several languages by the time it came into the hands of Mlle. de Corday d'Armont some ten years after its publication in 1770. So dangerous was it considered, and so offensive to authority, that the author had to flee France, and

when the pupil of the *abbaye-aux-dames* was reading his pages he was an old man living in exile in Germany.

Raynal (1711-1796), a native of Rouergue, had been a Jesuit preacher of some distinction, but his independent spirit irked at all restrictions and he left the Church to become editor of the *Mercure de France* and a writer who combined fame with profit. He had travelled in England and Holland—the seats of enlightened government—but had resided in Paris until the Parliament of Paris proscribed *Les Deux Indes*.

To read this book is like looking into a mirror wherein is mirrored the serene soul of the pupil of the *abbaye-aux-dames*, so easy is it to see the reflection of her spirit in this work she so loved, which she re-read again and again. Purporting to be an account, laborious and accurate, of the conquest and colonisation of the East by the West, this rambling book, in much superficial, alternating between the style of the guide-book and an impassioned eloquence, has a rare fascination, which is, in part, that of the fairy-tale.

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont's lively imagination, which had been fed on no scenery beyond the quiet Norman landscape, on no architecture beyond the sombre churches, convents and castles of Caen, delighted in the accounts of the strange, far-off lands conquered by the Portuguese, English, Dutch and French, the very names of which, Persia, Arabia, Malabar, Coromandel, Sumatra, Tartary and Yucatan, were like charms to efface the daily routine and evoke the rare and the precious. For a girl who had never permitted herself even to think of luxury, there was

pleasure in the description of mares with henna-dyed tails, of the peacock throne of the great Mogul, of the silks, brocades and lacquers of China, of the muslins and cloths of gold of India, of the exquisite spices of the East, of landscapes such as these: "*C'est là que la nature riche et belle offre une verdure éternelle, des fleurs d'un parfum exquis, des eaux de crystal tombant en cascade, des arbres chargés de fleurs et de fruits en même temps, des situations pittoresques que l'art n'imitera jamais.*"

The gentlewoman who had never had any but the simplest ornaments satisfied her taste by reading of the pearls of the Gulf of California, the virgin gold of the mines of India, the shawls of Kashmir, the balm, the camphire, the sapphires, the crystals—all the exotic luxuries of the new world that was the oldest world of all.

But while, in this immense book, itself as full of odd treasures as the storehouse of an Eastern King, the young girl liked to ponder over the accounts of distant, almost fabulous countries; what made the author so near her heart was his passionate hatred of tyranny and cruelty, his noble indignation over the unhappy peoples enslaved, exploited and ruined to satisfy the greed of the tyrant, the adventurer, the trader. Mingling the sentimentality of J. J. Rousseau with the vigour of Pierre Corneille, Raynal, after soberly describing the vanilla plant, the cochineal industry, the culture of jalap or of indigo, would break into diatribe against the savage Europeans and eloquently extol the native virtues and liberties they so wantonly destroyed. In these passages the heart of his young reader was fervently with him, and the more

she pondered over the words of the noble-minded *abbé*, the deeper she was confirmed in her worship of antique virtue.

A handsome edition of the *Deux Indes* was brought out in Geneva in 1780; in front of each volume was a copperplate from the elegant burin of Moreau le Jeune, representing some exotic, far-off scene—Montezuma's capture by the Spaniards, the English at the feet of Aurengzeyb—in itself sufficient to set the romantic mind on a fanciful voyage.

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On one passage Mlle. de Corday d'Armont often cast her serious glance, that in which Raynal, with startling suddenness, interrupted his account of Anjinga with an *éloge* in the style of Sterne; by many this piece was thought to have been written by Diderot. "If my writings live, the name of Anjinga shall remain in the memories of men . . . there was born Eliza Draper . . ."

In a tone of high-flown sentimentality, not without charm or pathos, Raynal proceeded to celebrate the young Englishwoman, Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, wife of Daniel Draper, counsellor at Bombay and friend of the Rev. Laurence Sterne, a delicate woman, who died of consumption at the age of thirty-three. "*Une âme céleste se sépara d'un corps céleste. . . . Heureux Sterne, tu n'es plus, et moi je suis resté. Je t'ai pleuré avec Eliza, tu la pleurerois avec moi; et si le ciel eut voulu que vous m'eussiez survécu tous les deux, tu m'aurois pleuré avec elle.*" In this style the aged author lamented his ideal woman who in her portrait had much in common with Mlle. de Corday d'Armont;



candour, sensibility, charm, elegance, and notably that rare combination of "*volupté et de décence*." Raynal wrote that Eliza Draper might have served as a model either for a statue of Profane or Sacred Love (*Volupté ou Pudeur*), so lovely was her form, so pure her soul; and the same might have been more truly said of the young Norman, with her brilliant beauty and her unblemished virginal modesty, than of Sterne's friend, of whom an English biographer wrote: "Her life would not bear inspection." But it was on her death-bed that Eliza Draper rose to those heights of sublimity that always roused the naïve admiration of Mlle. de Corday. Exhorting Raynal to follow the severe muse of History, the dying Eliza exclaimed, after references to Fame and the Phoenix:—"Que ces emblèmes t'exhortent sans cesse à te montrer le défenseur de l'Humanité, de la Vérité, de la Liberté."

In response Raynal swore to the shades of Eliza, "in Heaven, thy first and last dwelling-place," never to write a line she would wish blotted, and proceeded to a description of Cochin, where there was a colony of Jews who foolishly maintained that they had been there since the captivity in Babylon.

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All this was strange reading for an imaginative young girl, shut away from intercourse with the world, a nun in all but the vows, full of noble, generous instincts and completely ignorant of modern conditions. What could she make, in her solitary musings, of this unworkable mixture of paganism and Christianity, of the energetic grandeur of Corneille, the half-visionary ideas of J. J. Rousseau, the sentimentalities and the

honest tirades of the *abbé* Raynal, all derived from or fused with the heroes of antiquity?

And these heroes, who were they? Most of them had never existed, were fabulous demi-gods, or were ordinary men credited with impossible exploits. Such of them as might prove to be authentic lived in times so remote, under conditions so different, that their examples were useless to eighteenth-century France. False Greeks, false Romans, the turgid imaginings of a middle-class Frenchman, the nostalgic romancings of a neurotic, the sentimental meanderings of a third-rate philosopher, the brutal savagery of the old Testament—what intelligence could fuse this to any practical rule of life, to any clear and definite faith? No intelligence, perhaps, but this young woman was a mystic, she did not heed the dross in all these muddled doctrines, for, put through the alembic of her temperament, only the pure gold remained.

From her long brooding over the strange assortment of books which formed her little library she drew only ideals of liberty, goodness, strength, courage, self-sacrifice. She saw a Sparta, a Rome that had never existed, and could write, she who had wit and humour, in all sincerity:

*"O grande République! Vertus austères! Sublimes dévouements! Actions héroïques! Vous n'êtes plus de notre époque! Les François ne sont pas assez purs, assez généreux pour te comprendre et te réaliser, République de géants de l'antiquité! O nation trop frivole! Tu as besoin d'être régénérée et de puiser dans ton passé national les traditions du beau, du grand, du vrai, du noble!"*

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## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

Thus the young patrician in her convent, in her chaste seclusion, while in France events were taking place which would be written even in the briefest handbook to history, none of these, as yet, had anything to do with Mlle. de Corday d'Armont and their echoes hardly pierced the massive walls of the *abbaye aux dames*.

The nuns went about their lace-making, tapestry and embroidery, played their clavecins, distributed their bread and soup, visited their sick and poor, prayed and praised as the nuns of Matilda had done for nearly seven hundred years, and as peacefully as if their Norman cloisters were strong enough to stand till the Judgment Day and to weather all the storms of heaven and earth.

The pupils studied and read, dreamt and sewed, wandered in the old park and sat in the ancient chambers of the convent with their tapestry frames and their psalters. They, too, were assured that none of the distant excitement of which they occasionally heard would ever disturb this sacred tranquillity, and they turned their thoughts more and more to taking the vows. The world was so ugly, so corrupt, so distasteful! They were so poor, so high-born—where was there any place for them save in this sanctified retreat?

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There is an old legend of the magic mirror, in which not only the future could be seen, but events that were taking place at the other side of the world. The witch would breathe on the dim surface, and the seer peering within could glimpse the beloved who was oceans away, or even the stranger whose destiny was one day

to cross his own. Had Mlle. de Corday d'Armont possessed such a mirror, and had she looked into it sometimes during those seven years she lived in the convent, she might have seen two men, then as unknown to her as she to them, who were, in different parts of Europe, concerned with their own hopes and fears.

One of them she was to know well and to see once only for a few moments, the other she was never to see, never to be aware of his existence; on both she was to exercise the power of a Fate. Let them be considered, briefly and severally, while all their destinies are at pause, yet slowly converging together, like three travellers in leisurely fashion proceeding along three different roads to a common goal.

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The first picture that the magic mirror would have shown Mlle. de Corday d'Armont would have been the ancient city of Mayence, then the *aula* of the University, where a young man was receiving his *doctorat* of philosophy from three professors in sky-blue robes garnished with gold braid.

The successful student was the son of peasants, who had gained a scholarship at the University; on the academic register he was inscribed as *paupe*r. At first he had wished to study medicine, but anatomy had disgusted him and he had turned his lively intelligence and his diligence towards Philosophy. The teachers thought well of the amiable youth and he was in particular the favourite of Nicholas Vogt and his brother, Johann Heinrich Vogt.

To obtain his diploma the young man had written

a Latin thesis; his subject was Enthusiasm (*De Enthusiasmo*). He had, besides, to discuss with the examiners twenty-two subjects, the origin of ideas, Greek philosophy, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, on the Beautiful, astronomy, geometry, and physics among them.

Having satisfied the professors the young doctor was free to go in the streets of Mayence; the University was *en fête* for the gifts of the Elector, Charles Frederick von Erthal, who had marked the tricentenary of the foundation by presenting the incomes of three suppressed convents to the seat of Learning.

It was November, 1784, and the ardent young man long remembered the sensation of pleasure he had felt on that day of late autumn when he had succeeded in the first important step of his life and when his spirit was animated by, and his heart full of, the noble and sublime ideas that he had been expounding. He was nineteen years of age, of middle height, with blunt Teutonic features, brilliant grey eyes, a wide forehead and long, heavy light-brown hair; he had an appearance of great energy. The essay Enthusiasm had been written from his heart; in it he had, in mediocre Latin, full of Teutonic terms, striven to paint the "enthusiasm of the heart, transported by sublime and grand actions, showing its sentiments in abundant and lively expressions, without rule, without art, with movement and fire," and while he had composed his stiff periods his own blood had burned with the desire for self-sacrifice, for some splendid heroism, for service in the cause of liberty and virtue—republicanism and virtue. He, too, was a pupil of J. J. Rousseau; he, too, was lost in admiration of the heroes of antiquity;

he, too, valued the beautiful, the grand, the great enterprises—Mlle. de Corday d'Armont would have read his treatise with delight and would have subscribed to all the opinions it contained. The young doctor, detailing the different kinds of enthusiasms, moral, political, religious, was careful to repudiate fanaticism, intolerance, excess of any nature, and to teach that the true enthusiasm, which is capable of cutting through any obstacle, is free from vice, is pure and elevated. Above all, he extolled public and national enthusiasm—"such as animated the Greeks." Such enthusiasm was capable of causing revolutions, of reforming nations, of regenerating mankind.

With his head full of these exciting and other-worldly thoughts, the young doctor sought for a living. He found a post as tutor to the children of Herr Dumont, a rich merchant of Mayence.

His gentle manners, his noble and candid nature, his intelligence and the graces of his person obtained for him not only the friendship of his employers, but the hand and heart of Sabina Reuter, Madame Dumont's sister. Full of the ideals of Sparta, Rome and J. J. Rousseau, the young husband left the city and, with his wife's dowry and his own savings, purchased a little estate, Donnersmühle, near Kostheim, in the midst of joyous and delicious scenery. There he lived, with his loving wife and the three little girls whom she bore him, a life of classic simplicity such as would have pleased the author of *Emile*. He tilled his fields, cultivated his vines, gathered his dear ones round his humble hearth, meditated in the woods and lanes, or enclosed himself in his closet with his books and his meditations on politics, on literature, on the

ideals of J. J. Rousseau, on enthusiasm. When he left this charming retreat it was to go into the city to meet the savants and professors of Mayence and to discuss with them the thoughts which had risen in him during his solitude. Closest among his friends was the counsellor to the tribunal of the University, his brother-in-law, Johan Georg Reuter.

Thus the magic mirror would have shown this young man living in studious idyllic repose in his rustic retreat during the years that Mlle. de Corday d'Armont was in retreat in the *abbaye-aux-dames*; these two young minds, in much so similar, were being nourished by the same fare, both were being turned passionately in one direction, that of sublimity, self-sacrifice, enthusiasm.

This man came from the village of Obernburg in the electorate of Mayence. His name was Jean-Adam Lux.

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After the magic mirror had shown this simple and touching picture, which would have roused Mlle. de Corday d'Armont to admiration and respect, it would have presented to her another vision with which she would have had no sympathy—that of the other man whose destiny was to cut so sharply and so soon across her own. The scene is not very different; again it is a University, this time that of Rouen, where a prize is being awarded to the best thesis “on the use of electricity in medicine” (electro-therapy); again it is a doctor at a successful moment of his career, but now a doctor of medicine of the University of Saint Andrews, Scotland. He is older than Mlle. de Corday d'Armont and Jean-Adam Lux; he is, at the moment

(1783) he receives this honour, sombrely and with a grudging pleasure, nearly forty years old, is in doubtful circumstances and has seen altogether too much of mankind. He is soured, jealous, ambitious, gifted, hard-working, by birth a Sardinian, by upbringing a Swiss Calvinist.

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This struggling man of medicine, with his Scotch degree, had been born at Boudry, near the city of Geneva, and was the son of a poor chemist who worked at a textile factory and who came from Cagliari in the Isle of Sardinia. He was one of six children, four boys and two girls, and passed his infancy and childhood at Neuchâtel, where he was brought up on stern Calvinist lines by his father, who then earned a living by teaching languages. These children were taught as a trade that famous Swiss craft, the making of clocks, watch hands and very fine jewellery. The eldest daughter, Albertine, showed herself especially skilful at this delicate work.

The eldest of the family, Jean-Paul, was carefully educated; his quickness of mind and ardour to succeed secured him several prizes and the encouragement of his master, but his gloomy, bilious temperament, his fantastic vanity and uncouth appearance earned him the dislike, often actively expressed, of his fellow-students. He had a turn for science, was expert in several languages, energetic, curious and enterprising. In his early youth he had endeavoured in vain to obtain permission to join an expedition that was being sent to Tobolsk to observe the transit of Venus. Finding no definite goal for his vague and stormy ambitions



he resolved to travel, and supporting himself by teaching, journeyed to the Midi, residing in Toulouse and Bordeaux. He then went to London, Dublin, Edinburgh, The Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam, London again, always poor, restless, bitter, observant and gnawed by worldly ambition. He early turned to writing as a scope for his feelings and a bait for his desires. From the pleasant seclusion of Pimlico he sent forth pamphlets, essays, in the fashion of the moment; one of these, "A Philosophical Essay on Man," written in English, attracted considerable attention but produced no solid results. His work did not lack brilliancy, but was confused and superficial, largely owing to the obscurities and difficulties of his subject, and a little perhaps because some of his ideas were novel and ill-digested.

Translated into French, his books had a bad reception in Paris; the *philosophes* would have none of the young adventurer, and stung by their scorn he gloomily and bitterly started again on his travels. At Saint Andrews, in 1775, he took his degree in medicine, and he afterwards practised humbly in London, writing the while anonymous English pamphlets on medical subjects and a political one entitled "Chains of Slavery." In 1777 he returned to France, where he obtained a post in the household of the King's brother, the fashionable and elegant Comte d'Artois, *Monsieur*. His position was that of doctor to the *gardes* or gentlemen attendant on the Prince; he received his keep and, annually, two thousand *livres*. So far, gifts and industry were suitably rewarded and Jean-Paul might congratulate himself on being, at the age of thirty, a successful man. He may then be

imagined, in the years when Mlle. de Corday d'Armont was doing housework in the *Buttes de Saint-Gilles* or disciplining herself in the *abbaye-aux-dames*, when Adam Lux was studying hard in the University of Mayence or residing in his rustic retreat, as living (1777-1789) in a pleasant little apartment in the rue de Bourgogne, which, furnished elegantly and comfortably, was remarkable for a little collection of fine pictures. Not only had the young doctor his court appointment, but also a fashionable *clientèle*; he charged thirty-six livres a visit and never lacked patients. He soon, however, became impatient of the drudgery of what he termed a "*métier de charlatan*" and which seemed to promise no money, fame, or what he valued more, power. He neglected his patients for laboratory work and threw his passionate energy into an attempt to discover a remedy for a disease that he saw devastating his contemporaries—consumption (phthisis). He believed that he had secured a *spécifique* against this deadly malady and succeeded in curing a noble lady, the Marquise Laupespine, who had been given twenty-four hours of life by other doctors. This cure seemed like a miracle and brought Jean-Paul a number of patients and a good sale for the water that had rescued the fair marquise from the grave.

The young doctor was doubtless sincere in believing that he had made a remarkable discovery and did not suspect that if the lady had really been in the last stages of lung consumption, no *eau factice anti-pulmonique* could have cured her malady.

In 1783 came the prize for the thesis on "*l'électricité médicale*" and attempts to storm the austere

heights of the Academy of Sciences with brochures on "The Nature of Fire, etc.," "Discoveries on Light" and other experimental essays, which were not successful.

In 1784 Jean-Paul competed for and failed to obtain a prize offered by the Academy of Lyons; the subject was Sir Isaac Newton's theory of light. Deeply chagrined by this rebuff, the energetic competitor printed his thesis, which was an attack on Newton, and roused contempt and derision from the Academics.

Fearless and embittered, the author, attacking all accepted authorities, published one pamphlet after another, which showed no profound knowledge of his subjects but a quick, restless and lively mind. He became embroiled in quarrels with the scientists and the orthodox members of his own profession and began to turn to journalism and that type of political pamphlet which he, so long employed by royalty, had issued against tyrants in *L'esclavage*, written in his lonely youth. He was a quick, vivid writer, and his industry was enormous; the lust for power, for fame, for applause, drove him on like a spur in his side; he had no interest save for his work; he wrote of the "sublime Corneille," he admired the heroes of Greece and Rome, he called himself a disciple of J. J. Rousseau, but not for him was the dream of rural bliss, the vision of heroic grandeur, of self-sacrifice, of the felicity of mankind. His egotism was profound and with every failure more deeply wounded, until the whole morose and melancholy nature turned savage. If he ever pondered over the reformation of society it was because he thought that

an upheaval might mean an advantage to himself; if he hated society it was because it had not honoured him; if he thought the world was awry it was because there was not a sufficiently exalted place in it for himself. Could he have found his court in the civilisation about him he would not have found it corrupt, filthy, detestable. Could the worldly prizes he coveted have been his he would not have greatly cared for the wrongs and miseries of his fellow-men. It was his own grievance that corroded his soul, his personal disappointment that clouded his mind, his frustrated vanity that coloured his views.

His merits were considerable; his private life was chaste, he had no vices, he was capable of great endurance, he spared nothing in the furtherance of an aim, he was morally and physically fearless. His was, in much, the temperament of a Puritan, frustrated, thwarted, suppressed, unhappy, savagely ready to turn on those who had helped themselves to all those things he could not or would not enjoy.

His bad health was responsible for much of his violent temper, his restlessness, his misery.

In contrast to the serene health enjoyed by Mlle. de Corday d'Armont and Dr. Adam Lux, Jean-Paul was a neurasthenic, exhausted by toil, anxiety, envy and jealousy.

He would spend hours at his desk, writing with furious speed, until he trembled with fatigue, then drink quantities of black coffee to revive himself, this being repeated until he sank, insensible from exhaustion, into a half-drugged, uneasy sleep.

His appearance was remarkable, terrible and imposing. No more than five feet in height, his torso was

huge, his head enormous and sunk in his shoulders, his colouring of the South, masses of tousled dark hair, a yellow complexion, usually showing the unshaven traces of a black beard, yellow-hazel eyes, piercing, lively, formidable. The bony structure of the face showed under the lead-coloured skin, the nose was heavy, with a crushed look, the mouth swollen, brutal and distorted by a nervous twitching, the jowl gross and ugly. If the brow and eyes had a certain nobility, the lower part of the face might well be termed the jowl of a monster. He moved and spoke with a natural force and pride that were graceful in its spontaneous vigour. His voice was deep and powerful with a slight defect in his speech owing to the size of his tongue. He had neither manners, taste, nor any sense of the conventions, his attire was careless, his person neglected; he gave the impression of a driving force that did not yet know in what direction to turn its fury.

This sick, passionate creature, this man of science *manqué*, this cosmopolitan, southern by birth, Swiss Calvinist by upbringing, this ambitious, hideous charlatan searching desperately, frantically for an outlet for his feverish energies, was named Jean-Paul Marat.

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In the years 1789-1790 Mlle. de Corday d'Armont decided to take the veil and persuaded her sister to do the same; she wrote long letters to her uncle on this subject and other matters to her friends. Going abroad in Caen she bought a *Typus Mundi*, dated 1627, ornamented with engravings, and in it she wrote: "*Acheté 4 livres, C. de A. Sainte-Trinité à*

Caen, 20 décembre 1790."

Sometimes she signed herself Marie, sometimes Corday or Armont, or Corday Armont. She wrote to a friend, Madame Duhavelle, the story of Aglaë, who in the year A.D. 300 raised a statue to Saint Boniface at Rome; she wrote little business letters which show the careful Norman shrewdness. She was ignorant of the existence of Dr. Lux, of Dr. Marat; she scarcely knew what was taking place in France; she was still ignorant of love, still without fault or stain, resolute then to dedicate her life to God and to remain for ever in the seclusion of the *abbaye-aux-dames*. Every morning she took the Sacrament; when she prayed her face was hidden in her hands; she was pious, charitable, obedient, the humours of her youth were subdued; she no longer argued or showed obstinacy; she considered herself, and others considered her, as a nun—*une vraie religieuse*.

She wrote to her brothers on the charms of a conventual life and told of her *communications avec Dieu*. She was eager to show her devotion in undertaking the humblest and most difficult of labours; she eagerly nursed the sick—"if she had been asked to give her life," it was said of her, "she would not have hesitated to do so."

Yet amid all this atmosphere of Christianity, of feminine abnegation, of elegant seclusion, her soul was with her beloved heroes of antiquity, with Cinna, Manlius, Brutus, Decius, and her dreams were bright with sublime grandeur.

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The year 1789, Mlle. de Corday d'Armont in her

convent, Adam Lux on his farm, Jean Marat turning from medicine to politics—the outbreak of the French Revolution.

The States General opened on May 5th; what can they do for a country where affairs are in chaos and everyone is either incompetent or helpless?

Church, Nobles, Commons, the King, the Queen, the Princes of the Blood, all gathered at Versailles.

After disputes the Commons vote themselves a National Assembly and refuse (June 23rd) to obey the Royal command ordering them to quit the Tennis Court (*Jeu de Paume*), to which they have adjourned when the doors of *La Salle des Menus Plaisirs* are closed to them. M. Bailly, the astronomer, is the President; on June 27th the *duc* d'Orléans, most of the clergy and nobility, join the Assembly, which is divided into the Right (government), the Left (republican) and the Centre (moderates).

While Mirabeau and Sieyès harangue the Assembly, the foolish harassed King dismisses Necker, causing riots in Paris and the calling out of the soldiery. Amid turmoils a National Guard is formed with Lafayette as their head; they wear the tricolour—red, blue for Paris, white for the Bourbons; these are also the colours of the House of Orléans.

While the Assembly is arguing, the People, feeling authority feeble, begins to try its strength. On July 14th the Bastille, the almost disused State prison and fortress, is taken by the mob and its military defenders slain. Seven freed prisoners, five of whom are criminals, are paraded in triumph; it is a notable date in history, the era of liberty has begun. The King recalls Necker, grants an amnesty to the rioters,

establishes the *Commune* (government of the city of Paris) and puts the tricolour cockade in his hat.

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The ladies of the *abbaye-aux-dames* may have considered themselves safe from all these events, but the sudden outbursts of savage violence in different parts of the country did not spare Caen. Before the Revolution was well begun it was marred by the terrible excesses of the lowest classes and the violent characters who seized the opportunity of the weakening of all authority to try to push the nation into an anarchy where they might rape and plunder at their will.

In the *salon* of the *abbaye* Mlle. de Corday d'Armont had heard of M. de Belzunce, the handsome young officer who was related to the Abbess. This arrogant young aristocrat, wilful and fearless, did not hesitate to express his disgust at the growing power of the people; supported by a fellow-officer, the *duc* de Beavron, he turned his disdain on the newly-raised militia or National soldiers, and on his own authority broke up the meetings of the political clubs then being formed in Caen. General Dumouriez, Commander-in-Chief of the Army in the new Cabinet, warned him to be careful, but the young Vicomte laughed. A pamphlet exciting the army against the people was attributed to him and so exasperating was his insolent behaviour considered that the National Committee that had been set up in Caen requested the Governor-General of Normandy to remove M. de Belzunce from the garrison.

The climax came with a scuffle between the militia and the regulars in the streets of Caen; some fool



fired, a man was killed, and the town in an uproar. The Bourbon regiment fired on the crowd, the tocsin broke the slumbers of the nuns and their pupils; the alarm bells sounded, the Faubourg de Vaucelles was set on fire, the soldiers began to drag out their cannon.

It was a riot passing into a revolution; the officers of both sides went to the Town Hall to endeavour to come to an understanding. M. de Belzunce, who had come to his senses, was among them. When he left the militia guarded him in order to protect him from the fury of the people, to whom he was an object of peculiar detestation.

As they were taking him to the citadel the mob broke through the escort and seized the unhappy young man; a national guard shot him and his mutilated body was dragged through the streets, his head set on a pike, his heart torn out, roasted and eaten by a woman of the People.

This was some of the first blood shed in the Revolution, a terrible indication of the almost incredible savagery of the lowest people, who, brutalised by long oppression, ignorant, bestial, full of hatred towards their superiors, had not the intelligence to wait for the reforms being taken in hand by the Assembly, but, impatient and roused, rushed at once to bloody excess.

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont heard with horror of this murder which came so near to her and which was so shocking in its circumstances. A few days before his death the bold and charming young man had been walking in the *allées* of his *château* with Mlle. de Mortemart, his *fiancée*, playfully yoking himself to a little chariot to draw along some ladies. . . .

The young girl shuddered deeper into her cloisters,

delivered herself more passionately to her prayers and her dreams.

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The Assembly (*L'Assemblée Constituante*) is alarmed; the *canaille* tend to get out of hand; there are tales, from all over the country, of pillage, murder, burnings of *châteaux*, defiance of authority; the nobles begin to emigrate; among them the King's two brothers and the three Princes of the great House of Condé.

The deputies hesitate; what do the people want? How satisfy them? Can we even at this moment of terrible crisis venture to take from the only classes who have to give, the nobles, the clergy?

No one does anything, but a gesture of antique grandeur provokes a frenzy of enthusiasm.

It is a famous date—August 4th, 1789; the Vicomte Jean de Noailles rises and suggests the abolition of the Feudal system—quiet the people by giving them all they ask for, make all Frenchmen equal! He is seconded by the *duc d'Aiguillon*, always a liberal; amazed, the *Tiers Etat* applaud.

There is a frantic competition in generosity, noble after noble rises up and sacrifices all the goods and privileges of his Order, the clergy offer the *dîme* (tithe), the Provinces, Brittany, Languedoc, Artois, Burgundy, Lorraine, renounce their privileges—it is an orgy of self-immolation.

The deputies *semblent fous*, they weep, faint, embrace one another, 1,700 men become hysterical; not only have they saved their country from anarchy, they have laid the foundation-stone of the golden

age; they rush, overcome by emotion, to hear the Archbishop of Paris conduct a *Te Deum* in the ornate chapel of Versailles; it is a transport, a delirium, a stammering of joy: "*Quelle Nation! Quelle gloire! Quel honneur d'être français!*" What a triumph for the readers of Plutarch, for the disciples of J. J. Rousseau, for believers in antique virtue and the goodness of man—what a scene for an Adam Lux or Mlle. de Corday d'Armont to weep over!

There is no one among the enthusiastic legislators to note that M. de Noailles is a cadet of his house and ruined, that he has, in fact, nothing to give away, that his friends call him "*Jean sans terre*," that the other nobles offer what they can no longer protect, that the Church has offered the *dîme* when it is gorged with the greater part of the country's wealth.

"The people," declare the deputies, "will, overcome by gratitude, return at once to law and order."

But Mirabeau, the one great man in the Assembly, remarks on hearing the news from the provinces—"Before you give the people their rights, you must teach them their duties."

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Mlle. de Corday d'Armont heard, indeed, with boundless enthusiasm, of August 4th; she saw her dreams translated into realities, her visions made solid—the millennium realised, the doctrines of J. J. Rousseau, of Raynal, "her oracle," put into practice—France would be great, would be free, would be glorious, on the model of Sparta or the Rome of Brutus. She, too, wept tears of joy; the *Déclaration* (The Declaration of the Rights of Man, August 26th,

1789), drawn up as near as possible to the ideals of J. J. Rousseau, excited her most profound admiration. The promised land was in sight at last; "the rights of man" had been proclaimed by the government of a great nation. A constitution, modelled on that of the United States and inspired by the teachings of the Genevan philosopher, was to be given to the people of France: "*Nous voulons faire une déclaration pour tous les hommes, pour tous les temps, pour tous les pays, et pour servir d'exemple au monde!*"

This is the language of hysteria, of delirium. M. Dumont, a Swiss present at the meetings of the Assembly, dryly commented: "*Vaines disputes des mots, fatras métaphysique*"—"a class at the Sorbonne," while another foreigner, the German Campe, remarked that the confusion in the Assembly "was like a witch's Sabbath."

There was, however, no "medley of balderdash" in all this to Mlle. de Corday d'Armont, nor to thousands of others who hailed with triumph the redemption and happiness of mankind. Adam Lux wept in an ecstasy over his books in his rustic retreat, a young English poet then in Paris sighed:

*"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive  
But to be young was very heaven."*

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Jean-Paul Marat, abandoning all orthodox ways of a livelihood, had thrown himself violently into the disturbed current of the times. An inflammatory pamphleteer, a venomous journalist, scribbling with facility, power and fury, he soon was marked as a

dangerous man and pursued from pillar to post by the police under Lafayette. In his own words he was "exposed to a thousand dangers, surrounded by spies and assassins, chased from hole to hole, never able to sleep two nights in the same place." Lurking now with a butcher, now with an actress, he snatched at whatever asylum was offered, writing, writing, on truth, liberty, the rights and wrongs of the people, swollen by his own monstrous indignation at his own fate. He had forgotten his science, his attacks on Newton, his disputes with the Academics, his cures for consumption, his speculations on electricity; he was no longer interested in the cause of the colours in soap-bubbles, or the virtue of *l'eau ambrée* in milk; he had found his *métier*—he was a patriot—*l'ami du peuple*.

At one time he was reduced to hiding like a rat in the old quarries of Montmartre, at another to lurking in damp, dark cellars—*rongé par la misère la plus affreuse*.

Without shirt or stockings, wrapped in a filthy coat and breeches, his head of greasy hair tied in a torn handkerchief damped with vinegar, he sat hunched in his foul retreat, a pen in his hand, a wad of paper on his knees, like one making dynamite underground.

His health, always miserable, failed rapidly; the noisome air of his hole, the stink from the coarse oil of his crazy lamp, the damp, the wretched food, the anxiety, the rage that racked him caused inflamed eyes, chronic indigestion, constant headaches, nervous convulsion, and gradually a most repulsive skin disease resembling, in the eyes of the ignorant, leprosy.

The *Déclaration* had admitted the existence of God, the Church had not been touched, and the existence of the ladies in the *abbaye-aux-dames* remained unchanged; Normandy had accepted with enthusiasm the principles of the *Déclaration* and order had been restored in Caen after the Belzunce murder.

Madame de Belzunce died in 1787 and her place as Abbess had been taken by Madame de Pontécoulant; M. de Corday d'Armont, hoping to find some relief for his own grievances in this general adjustment of grievances, joined the medley of pamphleteers with *L'idée de Procès*, inspired by his own unhappy lawsuit, followed by *L'Egalité de Partages*. He had willingly accepted the abolition of those feudal rights which had not favoured him, a younger son, and, as representative of his parish, he claimed a share in the newly freed lands—he desired an equality of division among all the sons of a man of property; beyond this he did not go; he remained attached to the King, to the traditions of his class, and he viewed with alarm the possibility that the reforms he approved might be pushed to excesses that he would regard with horror.

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The Revolution spreads. In October, 1789, the frantic reception of the loyal Flanders regiment in the *Salon de Hercule*, the tricolour trampled underfoot, the white cockade triumphant, in the streets of Paris women with drums, shouting: "Bread! Bread!" Seven thousand of them marching on Versailles, driven out by the National Guard, the King forced to return to the Tuileries, virtually a prisoner.

On July 14th, 1790, Fête of the Federation, first

anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, all take the civil oath on the Champ de Mars: "I swear to defend the liberty of the nation."

It is another triumph for the idealists; the Bishop of Autun, assisted by four hundred priests on a huge altar, celebrates Mass and sprinkles holy water on the hundreds of banners of the people; they all wear tri-colour sashes, there is more weeping, more embracing, more enthusiasm; Autun, whose name is Charles de Talleyrand, whispers to Lafayette as he mounts the altar, "As long as you don't make one laugh"; a few weeks later Necker has resigned again; there is no money in the country, no bread—"You play act," says Mirabeau, "with bankruptcy staring you in the face."

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The clubs are founded; with their headquarters in Paris, they have branches all over the country; in the gloomy rooms of the old Jacobin convent in the rue St.-Honoré the extremists, ragged, dirty men, violent and forceful, meet by the light of cheap tallow candles; among them is one neither ragged nor dirty, but neat, charming, elegant and well behaved—Maximilien Robespierre.

In the ancient monastery of the Cordeliers is another club, the members of which are poor, oppressed, sombre and passionate; their avowed aim is the establishment of a free Republic. Among those who creep out of hiding to join these secret meetings is Jean-Paul Marat.

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In April, 1790, the Assembly, faced by a financial

crisis, confiscates the property of the Church; Necker, once more struggling with a crisis, has exhausted every expedient; "*la nationalisation des biens du clergé*" is a last and desperate resource which leaves three milliards' worth of property in the hands of the Government; against these not easily realisable securities, paper money, the famous *assignats*, is issued. The country is not satisfied by the spoliation of the Church any more than it has been satisfied by the self-sacrifice of the nobility; thoughtful people dread to look ahead, but Mlle. de Corday d'Armont remains in her convent, her state of exaltation undisturbed, Adam Lux regards France with envy from his orchards on the banks of the Rhine and passionately wishes he was a Frenchman, Jean-Paul Marat, eaten by disease and filth, scribbles in his foul hiding-place or raves at the forbidden meetings in the Cordeliers.

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The year 1791. The royal family tries to fly the country and is brought back, all functions of royalty are suspended, the Constituent Assembly is dissolved, the Legislative Assembly is formed of 745 Deputies elected by the people to frame the laws for the new Constitution. The divisions are as before; the Right, consists of the *Monarchists*, the Centre, the *Moderates*, the Left, the *Gironde*, so called because the most famous members were from the Gironde.

The King chooses his ministers from the Left, Roland, Dumouriez; they declare war on the Holy Roman Empire and on Russia, for these two Powers have sent insolent rebukes and demands to the



Assembly; the French are defeated in the field, the government enrolls 20,000 men for the defence of Paris, the King vetoes the measure; the mob storms the Tuileries; the Duke of Brunswick, sent with 140,000 men to crush the Revolution, issues an arrogant manifesto—"I am commissioned by the Sovereigns of Europe to lay Paris in the dust and crush the republican vipers under heel." Paris flies to arms, the Tuileries is attacked again, the Marseillais march on the capital singing the hymn of the Revolution; the King and the royal family are sent as prisoners to the Temple. Among the members of the Assembly who come into prominence is Jean-Paul Marat, who leaves his refuge of sewer rat to sit on the benches of the tribunes.

"I am," he cries, "the rage of the people."

And, in his rage, his dirt, his suffering, his fury, his venom, he does indeed seem to typify, foreigner as he is, that portion of the French nation which has hitherto been shut out, despised, starved, beaten, ridiculed.

He is a figure of horror, a monster, terrible and fascinating. *"Quoi! c'est là Marat! Cette chose fauve, verte d'habits; ces yeux gris faune si saillants! C'est au genre batracien qu'elle appartient à coup sûr plutôt qu'à l'espèce humaine. De quel marais nous arrive cette choquante créature?"*

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont begins to hear of him in the political gossip that filters through even to the convent, to read of him in the newspapers she so eagerly peruses; his name is linked with Danton, repeated with that of Robespierre; he becomes daily more powerful in the Cordeliers, which, with the Jacobins,

is daily becoming more powerful than the Government, if Government the Assembly can be termed.

By a decree of 1791 all monasteries and convents are closed; Mlle. de Corday d'Armont cannot then be a nun; the life for which she has been for seven years and a half insensibly preparing is forbidden. No longer are masses to be sung for the soul of Queen Matilda; the *abbaye-aux-dames* becomes National Property. The young girl lingers on the threshold of change; she is allowed to remain in the cloisters for a while, reading, pondering; she is there when Marat and Danton, representing the Mountain, or Extreme Left, urge on the September massacres as reprisals against the royalists for the march of the invaders on Verdun; ten thousand prisoners are slaughtered in two days by hired murderers, while Dumouriez drives the enemy back across the Rhine, retaking Verdun and Longwy.

Mlle. de Corday d'Armont hears rumours, echoes, confused reports of these events; all increase her admiration for the *Gironde*, these true Republicans, disciples of J. J. Rousseau, lovers of Plutarch, who talk in terms of Greece and Rome, these men worthy of the names of Cato, Cincinnatus, Brutus, Manlius—she perceives that they have their enemies, that the tyrants are not crushed. But Tarquin and Caligula were not to be found on the throne, now overturned, but on the benches of the tribunes, disguised under the ferocious masks of Danton and Marat.

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In this terrible year of 1791 Mlle. de Corday d'Armont leaves, at length, and reluctantly, the quiet

seclusion of the ancient convent, the *allées* of elms, the labyrinth of hornbeams, and returns to her father at Mesnil-Imbert; the family, in accordance with the new republican fervour and the law of 1790 suppressing titles of nobility, cease to use the name of their estate; the eldest daughter, on re-entering the world, takes her third name; she is now known as Charlotte de Corday.

T H R E E

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A  
GENTLEWOMAN

“La Liberté avait mis au monde un aimable et joyeux enfant; mais deux furies, l'Ambition et la Rapacité, ont métamorphosé ce fils de la Liberté; elles l'ont aspergé de sang et, après avoir hurlé trois fois et poussé par trois fois un éclat de rire insultant, elles ont jeté le monstre sur la France . . . sa main s'arme d'un poignard et se rougit de sang, sa bouche ne prononce d'autre mot que la môt *mort*.”

*Die Verwandlung*, Klopstock.

“La désorganisation du Royaume ne pouvait être mieux combinée.”

*Gabriel Riguetti Mirabeau, 1791.*

IT seemed very far from all these events at Mesnil-Imbert; Charlotte de Corday was absorbed into her pastoral life again, mingled with her friends, became part once more of the Norman air, the Norman landscape. For a while she wore the dark blue habit of the *abbaye-aux-dames* which appears to be that of a novice, worked among the poor and the sick, but soon she adopted a secular dress and occupied herself almost entirely with children, for whom she had a tender affection.

She gathered round her in the old bakehouse little classes for lace-making, for reading, and she could often be seen racing her little pupils down the valleys, the winner rewarded with a doll of her own making.

Above all, she was admired for her sweetness—*douce, si douce*, they said of her; she was frequently compared to an angel, the type of angel worshipped by holy nuns and trusted by little children.

She had an entire absence of any kind of affectation. Her sincerity was absolute; she had the unself-consciousness of perfect breeding and did not appear to know that she was beautiful; her gorgeous tresses were not dressed or powdered more than four times a year; for the rest they hung as they would over her shoulders, confined by a simple ribbon or falling under a plain cap; sometimes lightly powdered by herself in front where the small ringlets waved on the pure brow.

She wore in the summer austere gowns of Indian muslin, embroidered by herself round the hems, and grey in colour; one was in wide stripes of two shades

of brown. She had a riding habit of white cloth, gallooned with braid; on fête-days she wore robes of taffetas, white, grey, rose, all unpretentious, elegant, the attire of a gentlewoman.

When not reading or occupied with her pupils, she was busy with the little arts taught her at the convent, drawing, tapestry, fine sewing, all of which well suited her delicate fingers.

She taught lace-making to the peasant women, introducing *le point de France*, which she said had been brought to the country by a Queen of France and by which a poor woman could gain as much as three francs a day.

After her lessons to her little ones she would play with them, blind-man's-buff, ring-a-roses, dances; she was gay, light-hearted, cheerful—Mesnil-Imbert was so far from Paris with its gathering storms, the pastoral beauty of the fields was so changeless!

In the old brick *colombier* where the doves flew in and out of their niches she would tell the fair-haired little Normans of the sublime deeds of the ancient heroes which might be found in Plutarch and Corneille, teach them the grandeur of love, of country, of self-sacrifice, of fortitude. She would tell them of the new government in France, which was founded on these pure models of antiquity, of the new tribunes of France, the members of the *Gironde*, republicans all worthy of Sparta. Surely these children would live to see this glorious dawn increase in power until the beams of brilliant day blessed the beloved land! A government modelled on Rousseau, conducted by men who were nourished on Marcus Aurelius, who had put up a bust of Brutus in the Senate and who had

taken as their motto, Liberty or Death!

The fair eyes of Charlotte de Corday gleamed with ardour as she expounded these wonders to her patient little audience in the dovecote, who endured the lessons for the sake of the lovely teacher and of the sweetmeats to follow.

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On the borders of the Rhine, Adam Lux dreamed the same dreams of a golden age, as he wandered with his Plutarch or his *Contrat Social* in his hand; he shared to the full the tumult of excitement and admiration created among the German intellectuals by the events in France, an enthusiasm expressed in the frantic odes of Klopstock, who saw, "with an effusion of joy and tears in his eyes," the "audacious diet of Gaul," setting out to reform civilisation. He was glad to have lived sixty-four years to see this "*plus grand acte du siècle*," and transported by his fervour he exclaimed: "*le soleil monte toujours!*"

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Jean-Paul Marat also became more *Rousseauiste* than ever, more blindly, more fanatically attached to the rights of man. He worked as furiously as he had done in his laborious youth, when for three months he had toiled twenty-one hours out of the twenty-four at his "Chains of Slavery"; snatching at cups of black coffee to keep himself awake, falling at last in a stupor of exhaustion over the poor desk where he kept the two pistols he had ready to greet the police. His paper *L'ami du peuple* had failed for lack of capital soon after it was started in 1789, but had been revived



again in 1791. After a brief visit to London, the patriot had installed at No. 39, *rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie*, a small printing press and had begun the regular issue of his newspaper. He was enabled to do this through the devotion of a woman. Hideous, diseased, filthy as he was, suffering in mind and body, he won the tender affection and the deep loyalty of a woman twenty-six years old, Simonne Evrard, who was of good character and possessed a small capital. This she put at the disposal of Marat, and he devoted it all to the printing press and the paper. On what he could earn as a journalist and on the profits, small indeed at first, of *L'ami du peuple*, Marat set up a poor home with Simonne Evrard and Albertine, his sister, who held him in a passionate admiration and contributed to the miserable *ménage* by her exquisite work at watch-making.

Marat, in the increasing fervour of republicanism and the gradual disappearance of the *ancien régime*, had been able to leave his hiding-places and start this little establishment with the two women who held him in such admiration and respect; he did not marry Simonne, as he despised such conventions as matrimony, but he was grateful to her and offered her all that he could offer any woman.

Not only had she put her entire fortune at his disposal so that he might realise the dream of his heart, the publication of the paper, she had, at her own peril, hidden him when he had been pursued by the agents of Lafayette.

He espoused Simonne after the manner of Rousseau; taking her hand in his, he led her, one day of sunshine, to his open window, and asked her

to kneel with him before Heaven—in the presence of the Supreme Being.

“It is in the vast Temple of Nature,” said Marat, “that I take, for witness of the eternal fidelity I swear to you, the Creator who hears us.”

Both of them kept these unconventional vows; they were as serious, as self-centred, as determined as they were poor. Simonne was a respectable, comely woman, of decent behaviour, short, with brown eyes and hair, an oval face, a high nose, a large mouth, a grave expression. Marat, who seemed to his enemies like an obscene toad which had crept up from some stagnant marsh, who was in truth so foul in his person that even his friends did not dare sit next him on the benches of the Assembly, had aroused in this young woman a passion which made her willingly his companion, nurse and servant, cheerfully performing the most menial and the most loathsome offices. She was not, however, fastidious, and Marat’s apartment always had an air of squalor.

In this year 1791 the cruel disease that had seized Marat was rapidly increasing in virulence, encouraged by his filthy habits, his nervous tension, his incessant labours.

He was often in bed for days together with attacks of pain, fevers, headaches, and he was never free from the steady torture of a skin disease, herpes. He wrote himself of “the long and cruel malady” which tormented him, and a notice in a newspaper of July, 1791, mentioned the miserable couch of *L’ami du peuple*, where the patriot lay agonised by “*une migraine affreuse et dévoré d’une fièvre ardente, la tête enflée comme un boisseau avec une fluxion épouvant-*

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

*able sur tout le côté gauche et les vésicatoires sur les cuisses, ne pouvant changer d'attitude depuis plusieurs jours."*

Nothing could be in more violent contrast to the radiant figure of Charlotte de Corday, teaching virtue to her little pupils in the old dovecote, or to that of the comely young German in his pure exaltation and rustic retreat, than that of Jean-Paul Marat, with his polluted body, ruined nerves and half crazy mind, working in his sordid Parisian apartment.

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Charlotte de Corday was an avid reader of newspapers and pamphlets, in particular of the Press of the Gironde; she supported this party with all the force of her passionate convictions; when the King chose his ministry from among them she was full of delight. She followed with eager admiration the acts of M. Roland, and of his wife Manon Philipon, muse and priestess of the Gironde. These were great men, these were the saviours of their country; she mingled their names with those of the heroes of antiquity. She longed ardently for an opportunity to do them a service, to express her admiration for them, even if need be to sacrifice herself for them, as she had longed to sacrifice herself as a child to her sick mother, as a girl to the infirm and the poor, as a maiden to God.

Her nature, always in extremes, saw these men as figures out of the dramas of Corneille and as such they passed into her pure and proud reveries.

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Who were these amateur senators, the members of

the *Gironde*, who had so inflamed the intellectuals of Europe with enthusiasm for their patriotic virtues? They were young men (most were under thirty, and none was over forty years of age), of middle class, well educated, of high morals, fine ideals, full of enthusiasm, courage and good intentions. They were, except for the atheism which most of them professed, fanatic followers of J. J. Rousseau, and they all carried the prevalent fashion for antiquity to a mania. They were more familiar with Greece and Rome than with their own provinces, more at home with the heroes of Plutarch than with their own countrymen; they were journalists, lawyers, medical students, small squires. There was not one man of action among them, but all of them could write and talk and their leaders were unsurpassed in brilliant eloquence. All were full of theories, of schemes for reform, of noble sentiments, of high ideals. All were gentlemen, most of them were good-looking with seductive personalities and the attractions of wit, generosity, moving eloquence, graceful delivery, elegant gesture, an air of culture and refinement.

Most conspicuous among them was Pierre-Victorin Vergniaud, thirty-three years of age, whose melting and impassioned speeches, contrived with every art and composed, it was said, of honey and gold, could affect any audience to any purpose. He thought, spoke and acted *en romain*. He was a gifted author and wrote dramatic pieces for his charming mistress, Mlle. de Candaille; for the rest he was indolent, sentimental, voluptuous, escaping in reveries from the realities he could neither understand nor face. François Buzot, fiery, sentimental, honourable, Isnard and Grange-

neuve, full of force and enthusiasm, Brissot de Warville, with his Quaker-like appearance, austere life and skilful pen, were other ornaments of the ranks of the *Gironde*. Equal to these in fame were Elie Marguerite Guadet, the thin, subtle lawyer, unequalled in sarcasm and bold invective, Armand Gensonné, and Charles Barbaroux with his southern eloquence, his "port of a Marc Antony" and his daring enthusiasm. He had been a student under Jean-Paul Marat when that struggling doctor had tried to add to his resources by holding classes for the study of electricity.

Other prominent members of the *Gironde* were Jérôme Pétion, who exerted a strong influence over his party, and Lanjuinais, who had founded the first Jacobin club; the entire group was inspired by an impractical philosopher, the Marquis de Condorcet.

These men, who essayed to govern a nation at a moment of appalling crisis, did not number one able politician, nor even one shrewd man of the world in their brilliant ranks. They were amateurs in everything save journalism and party oratory; often, intoxicated with their own verbiage, they would sacrifice a principle for a fine phrase, a truth for a round of applause, and leave the Assembly, ashamed of what they had said. Well intentioned, brave and attractive as they were, they were fitted for nothing but the static poses of the orator addressing the Senate, or the patriot dictating his memoirs or scribbling rigmaroles for the Press. They were *fanatiques de Rousseau* without having grasped his teaching (even if that teaching could at this juncture be turned to practical account), they were republicans without knowing

how to form a republic, they were utterly tedious in their endless references to Cato, the Gracchi, to Brutus, the father of Roman liberty and his stoic namesake; they had so little humour as to term Louis XVI Caligula or Tarquin, and yet they had not really studied the antique models over which they raved, nor penetrated beneath the surface of those classic institutions and events that appeared so perfect from a distance.

Their attire marked them out from the brocaded, powdered nobles and the ragged hordes of the people. They affected that classic simplicity, which was to create a uniform dress for all classes, sombre but not unbecoming, plainest of coats and breeches, or the new trousers, simple linen cravats, with large muslin bows, a toga-like cloak, long hair hanging loose and cut in a Brutus fringe, a large leaved hat turned back from the face with the huge tricolour cockade or a high-crowned beaver. Their youth, their good intentions, their incompetence added to their useless brilliancy, gave them that romantic pathos which attaches to the doomed leaders of a lost cause.

Such as they were they satisfied Mlle. de Corday, who, judging them largely through their own Press, found no fault with them. It was because of her admiration for the *Gironde* that she came to a disagreement with her father. The eldest son had emigrated and had drained the slender family resources for his expenses, and M. de Corday had then retired to Argentan, where he lived with his two daughters in the *rue de Bègle*. This small, quiet country town, far from even the echo of events and without the pleasures and labours of the country, did not

suit the growing restlessness of Charlotte de Corday; she found there none of the joys of the pastoral, the peace of the convent, nor the excitement of the city.

Besides, dissension appeared for the first time in the poor home; M. de Corday remained faithful to the King, to the *ancien régime*, much as he desired reforms, in particular the abolition of the galling feudal system. He rebuked his elder daughter for her passionate republicanism, her fiery admiration of the *Gironde*; the gentle Eléonore supported her father; the atmosphere became strained, painful. Charlotte obtained permission from her father to visit a distant relation, a certain Madame de Bretteville, a widow in comfortable circumstances, who lived in retirement at Caen.

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Madame de Bretteville inhabited an old and gloomy house, 148, *rue Saint-Jean*, at Caen. This was one of the main streets of the town and ran from the river to the citadel; it consisted of aristocratic, though sombre and ancient houses, two splendid churches, Saint-Pierre and Saint-Jean, and was inhabited by the most snobbish of those patrician families who still remained in Caen; it contained the *hôtel de Faudoas*, where M. de Belzunce had walked in the garden with his *fiancée* shortly before his murder; *le grand Manoir*, the *hôtel de Beauvron*, several other noble mansions; nearby was the *hôtel de l'Intendance*, the principal hostelry of the town.

No. 148 was situate near the rich and imposing Church of *Saint-Jean*; it was set back in a dark and narrow court in the middle of which was a pump; the ground-floor was let to a wood-turner named Lunel,

who used the premises as a workshop; a narrow door, a corridor led to the staircase that ascended to Madame de Bretteville's apartments. The house had a balcony on the first floor, was gabled, with a steep roof. The mistress of this modest, respectable and aristocratic establishment was a dull, ordinary old woman, religious, conventional, correct in everything, feeble in health, apathetic in character, much respected by her neighbours as a well-behaved person of impeccable morals and good breeding. She had been for some months a widow and her life had always been monotonous and dull—often exasperating.

She had been an heiress, the rich Mlle. Lecoutelier de Bonnebos, a neglected child, idle and depressed, growing up at random in the establishment of her father, which was ruled over by a succession of mistresses. Plain and uninteresting as she was, she might have married several times, but her father and the prospective husbands could never agree on the amount of her dowry. When she was forty years old, a decayed gentleman, M. de Bretteville, offered to take her with a small sum, in view of her father's great age and the fortune she would enjoy on his death.

M. de Bonnebos, however, continued to survive, while the De Bretteville *ménage* sank into poverty and despair, blackened by acrid disputes between husband and wife about the longevity of her father.

"I can't murder him to please you," she would say bitterly.

The birth of a child added to their difficulties; but while they were perplexing themselves as to her future, the girl died, aged seventeen, in 1789.

On the very same day, M. de Bonnebos, then aged



eighty-nine, married an ancient mistress of seventy-six, with whom he had lived for fifty years.

"I hoped to marry my daughter and bury my father," said Madame de Bretteville. "It is the other way about!"

A few months after his marriage, M. de Bonnebos died, leaving a large portion of his fortune to his widow, and to his daughter an income of 40,000 *livres*, some valuable furniture and a quantity of diamonds. Timid, crushed by ill-fortune, Madame de Bretteville continued to reside in the house she had inhabited for years; she added some of her father's costly furniture to her modest rooms, wore his rich diamonds on her withered fingers, and lived her uneventful effaced existence. Uneducated and idle as she was, unable even to sew, not caring to read, she had yet a certain polish and elegance—the allure of a gentlewoman, and knew how to run an orthodox establishment.

This was managed by two confidential servants, the couple Leclerc and a maid named Anne Bosquaire. Madame Leclerc was the cook-housekeeper, her husband was much in the confidence of his mistress. He was of superior birth, his father having been a land surveyor, and was intellectually inclined, fond of serious reading, of political argument, a good business man, reliable and faithful; he really played the part of secretary or confidential steward to Madame de Bretteville without in any way overstepping his place. He had studied astronomy and medicine; of firm character and sound judgment, short, plain, pale, with high forehead and snub nose; he was the guiding but unobtrusive spirit of this precise household.

The most notable families of Caen visited Madame

de Bretteville, dined at her well-kept table, or drank tea in her sombre, elegant salon—the families de Faudoas, Hérrier, de Loyer, de Tournélis Bougon-Langrais, Boisjungan de Maingré, the President of the Assembly and President of the Administrative Department of Calvados, the Comte Doulcet de Pontécoulant, nephew of the abbess of the *abbaye-aux-dames*, all the officials and notables of Caen in the year 1791. The Norman town had approved with effusion the incidents of the Revolution, the taking of the Bastille, *La Déclaration*, the *Fête du Champ de Mars*. The Normans were mainly in sympathy with the *Gironde*, without relinquishing their moderate and in many cases royalist sentiments.

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Into this obscure and stately dwelling arrived suddenly Mlle. de Corday, with her beauty, her energy, her remarkable personality.

Madame de Bretteville was amazed to see her, did not at once know her—after all, the relationship was slight, she was Mlle. de Corday's aunt *à la mode de Bretagne*, M. de Corday's cousin in the seventh degree. She found this intrusion of youth and beauty into her routine startling, but the girl demanded her hospitality and it was offered, though with some reserve.

Madame de Bretteville anxiously confided to a friend that she did not know her young visitor from "Adam or Eve," that she resented this sudden visit—she liked ceremony, respect, formality—besides, there was something about the young girl that made her vaguely uneasy—she was too serene, too stately, too

reserved—what reason had she for coming so suddenly to Caen?

Mlle. de Corday did indeed seem to put out that dim household, as a star might outshine a row of candles. Where everything was mediocre, dull, even mean and petty, she was in everything remarkable; Madame de Bretteville appeared before her like a drab sparrow before a bird of Paradise. An eye-witness of her own sex, Madame de Maromme, thus described Charlotte de Corday at this time:

“She had grown very tall and very beautiful, her figure, perfectly formed, though a little robust, did not lack nobility; her carnation was of a dazzling purity and the most brilliant freshness. Her complexion had the transparency of milk, the flush of the rose and the velvetiness of the peach, the tissue of the skin was of the greatest fineness—you could see the blood circulating behind the petal of the lily. She blushed very easily and then became truly ravishing. Her eyes were deep-set and very beautiful, though slightly veiled in expression. Her chin was slightly *de galoche* (prominent), but her countenance was full of charm and distinction. The expression of this lovely face was of an ineffable sweetness, as was the sound of her voice. Never has been seen an expression more pure, more angelic, more candid, nor a smile more attractive. Her golden chestnut hair suited admirably with her complexion. She did not hold herself well, her head always drooped a little.”

This last defect was common among Norman women. Madame de Bretteville received coldly this dazzling creature who came to ask of her an asylum in the name of their common ancestor, Corneille; her dry



*Corday*

CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY

*From Charles Waltner's engraving of Hauer's portrait.*



manners were caused partly by timidity—the sensitive girl defended herself by a calm serenity, she had early and long learned reserve, control, fortitude.

The prim young housekeeper, Madame Leclerc, showed the unwelcome guest to her chamber, using the haughty manners of a spoiled and favourite servant. If Mlle. de Corday had expected a warmer welcome, a more agreeable establishment, more gaiety and comfort, she concealed her disappointment—she was used to poverty and to the life of a nun.

The chamber allotted to her was on the first floor with a balcony, giving on the courtyard by a tall narrow window with leaded lozenge-shaped panes; the floor was paved with bricks, overhead was a ceiling with blackened beams; a huge hooded chimney shaded the wide hearth; a faded tapestry was on the walls. Madame de Bretteville had not indeed taken much trouble with this mournful guest-chamber, in furnishing which neither comfort nor taste had been considered, but which had an air of decency and gentility. Two chests of drawers, a card-table with a green baize covering, two antique chairs with worn damask and fringe, an oak coffer with a dim mirror composed the furniture of this room so little suited for the use of a brilliant young woman. The bed was old-fashioned, gloomy, with posts, curtains and valances in plain damask from which all the colour had faded.

The window looked on the street and afforded a view of the sombre houses opposite, and a street which divided them in which was the *hôtel de l'Intendance*, where strangers came and went. At the side, blocking the light, was a building used partly for storing grain, partly as a residence. The sun never penetrated this

chamber, winter and summer there was an even, grey illumination.

Mlle. de Corday accepted this asylum with resignation and dignity; she unpacked her trunk and placed on the table beside the bed the Plutarch, the Bible, the volumes of J. J. Rousseau and the *abbé* Raynal she had brought with her from Argentan. This last author was more than ever "her oracle" by reason of his heroic behaviour. In March, 1791, he had sent a letter to the Assembly, warning them of the dangerous direction in which affairs were being allowed to drift and rebuking "the tyranny of the people" which might be more terrible than the tyranny of kings, and pointing out the alarming state of the country, "soldiers without discipline, generals without authority, ministers without power——"

He then sternly blamed the wild licence of the inflammatory section of the Press (of which Marat's *L'ami du peuple* was a fair specimen), the useless metaphysical discussions which served only as germs of disorder, the harsh treatment of the King. He pointed out anarchy ahead for France—"a King without power, a people without a bridle." Instead of the people being freed, they would in their turn become *le tyran le plus féroce*. Raynal was eighty years of age and had long been one of the prophets of reform, one of the most eager friends of liberty. Therefore this grave and bold warning filled the Assembly with alarm and dissension. The Right applauded; the Left hesitated; the Extremists were furious; Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, Marat violently attacked Raynal as senile and disloyal.

Mlle. de Corday read the letter (it was printed)

with passionate interest; one phrase of this author in particular had always rested in her mind: "*On ne doit pas la vérité à ces tyrans.*"

She was already familiar with other grand sentiments of this philosopher: "Glory belongs to God in heaven, on earth to virtue, not to genius—virtue sublime, startling, benevolent, heroic . . . this is the virtue owned by one who gives his life for his subjects, this is the virtue of a people who would rather die free than live as slaves—the virtue not of a Cæsar or a Pompey, but of a Cato or a Regulus."

Was not this an echo of Corneille? Did not Raynal, the great man of the moment, confirm Corneille the great man of the past? Republican idealism, grand self-sacrifice, magnanimous love of country, of *goodness*.

And if Mlle. de Corday shared the admirations of this *fanatique par humanité* she also shared his hatreds. With what scorn and loathing did she regard those whose excesses were already staining the glories of 1789, those furious scribblers, those venomous orators who were arousing the people to blind fury! Foremost amongst them and typifying them all, she saw Jean-Paul Marat, the dwarf, the monster with his misshapen body and mask of satyr, covered with sores, in his filthy clothes, two pistols in his belt, his bare legs thrust into broken boots, a dirty rag round his brows, inciting to anarchy, to blood, to ruin, destroying the work, overturning the ideals of the *Girondists*, the true Republicans, the saviours of their country, full of antique virtue.

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Mlle. de Corday had a small allowance from her father and a modest store of clothes; her expenses were low, but she was poor, almost existing on charity since Madame de Bretteville continued to offer her hospitality, but coldly and without affection. Thus driven in on herself the sensitive ardent girl turned more and more to her reading; pamphlets, brochures, newspapers accounted for most of her modest pocket money.

She was a subscriber to the press of the *Gironde*: *La Gazette Quotidienne*, *Le Courrier Français*, *Le Courrier Universel*, *Le Courrier des Départements*, *Le Patriote Français*; from these she drew strong nourishment for both her admirations and her hates.

Like Madame Roland with her hair cut *à la Titus* and her Grecian robes, this girl believed that she was living in the times she adored; also like Madame Roland, she preferred to think of herself under masculine times; hero was to her a nobler term than heroine, and those antique women whom she most admired, the Emilias, Cornelias, Livias, Judiths, Jaels, were those who had least of the feminine in their composition.

Yet in herself, and unknown to herself, Mlle. de Corday was touchingly feminine, in her exalted enthusiasm, in her compassion, in the nervous fortitude with which she covered her sensitiveness, in her dreams of the heroic and sublime, and, most of all, in her judgment, so perilously based on sentiment and emotion.

The first awkwardness of her residence in the *rue Saint-Jean* was broken by the arrival of two ladies, mother and daughter, Madame and Mlle. de Loyer,

whom she had known when she had lived in the *Buttes de Saint-Gilles* at Caen; the younger had sometimes been a fellow-pupil in her lessons with her uncle.

"What! do you not know me?" she cried joyously. "It is the little d'Armont!"

They had not indeed known her, for they had not seen her since she had been at the convent, and the beautiful creature startled them; they received her with an affection that moved Madame de Bretteville in her niece's favour. The old lady gave the girl several handsome dresses and paid for lessons for her—dancing, music, deportment; the dull and timid widow had no affection to give, but she tolerated Mlle. de Corday because of her rank and their relationship.

The well-bred girl was warmly received into what remained of society at Caen; she sparkled at several aristocratic dinner-tables and in *salons* where the questions of the day, so vital, so terrible, were being discussed. Her young friend loosened her splendid ringlets, threaded a glittering ribbon through them, arranged a fichu of lace round her shoulders, a rose on her bosom, and the nun was transformed into a polished young aristocrat.

But Mlle. de Corday was still gravely absorbed in her reveries, disdainful of the world. She would, when in company, suddenly rouse herself from a day-dream to pronounce a glowing eulogy on some classic hero or heroine of her choice until her friend Mlle. de Loyer lovingly checked her, warning her that she would be considered, in the opinion of ordinary people, odd; after this, she would, when tempted to betray her feelings, restrain herself, blushing, on a glance from her

friend, but she retained these deep emotions, none the less, passionately locked in her heart.

Apart from this social life there was not much for Mlle. de Corday to do in Caen, no outlet for her energy, no scope for her talents, no prospects of anything in the future beyond this respectable, dull life of a poor gentlewoman in attendance on an elderly and indifferent relative.

They were long days when there were no visits to be paid or received, when in these large gloomy rooms in this sombre house in this dull provincial town, the young girl sat in the eclipse of idleness. The prim establishment ran without her assistance; three efficient servants, a mistress who gave little trouble; a monotony of small events made up the tedious days.

Often the brilliant young woman would sit down to the neat meals along with her small, hunch-backed hostess with her faded features, winged cambric caps and widow's attire, with her diamonds and her air of timidity and disappointment.

The meals would be served slowly, with formal ceremony, with handsome crystal and silver, the dog and the cat would sit either side of their mistress's chair waiting for tit-bits, Madame de Bretteville's only smiles were for Minette, her only caresses for Azor; a few remarks, peevish, glacial, or trite, were offered now and then to her companion, whose demeanour was always sweet and respectful, but who refused to flatter or to hide her opinions.

The meal over, and the duties that Madame de Bretteville demanded had been attended to, the girl would escape to her sad chamber and lose herself in dreams which shone the brighter for contrast with the

poor mediocrity of her life.

Taught never to be idle, she would endeavour to beguile tedious boredom by sewing, lace-making, drawing, writing verses, but all was, to her, a sham; she worked without purpose or direction, and often the needle or the pencil would drop from her hand and she would pick up a newspaper or a pamphlet to read once more the terrible news from Paris.

In blood, fire, thunder, the year 1792 passed over France. In September, the Legislative Assembly fell and was replaced by the Convention, composed of seventy-two deputies who abolished all titles, decided that the year 1792 was the Year I of the Republic, One and Indivisible, and who were divided into three main parties, the *Gironde*, under Brissot, the *Montagne*, so called from the high-placed seats the deputies of the Extreme Left occupied in the Senate and the *Centre*, *Plaine* or *Marais*. Prominent among the *Montagnards* were Danton, Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat, the Secretary of the Commune, one of the representatives of Paris; the situation soon resolved itself into a struggle between these two opposing parties, the moderates and idealists, the extremists and realists; the fate of the King became of paramount importance; the *Gironde* would have saved him, though they knew that the *émigrés* and the foreign armies which threatened France, the King's allies, would, if they could, destroy them; true to a principle, they remained indifferent to their own interest, their own safety. With equal heroism and sincerity, the *Montagne* were resolved on the extreme step of the death of the King as a symbol of the extinction of royalty, as a gage of defiance to Europe. This struggle took place in the

midst of a country hovering on the brink of anarchy and bankruptcy and threatened by a foreign invasion on all sides; a growing sense of tension, a deepening horror, gripped the nation; steadily the nobility crept away to the Rhine, where the army of Condé gathered daily in numbers if not in strength. A sense of impending disaster was in the air as if the bold prophecies of the *abbé* Raynal were about to be fulfilled.

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It was supposed in the society of Caen that Mlle. de Corday would marry; several eligible men were discussed by Madame de Bretteville and her cronies.

But Mlle. de Corday, always reserved, discreet, though often gay and witty, kept all suggestions of marriage, all proposals at a distance, never a hint of a romance, a coquetry, a sentimental friendship touched her life, which still had about it the lofty calm of the convent.

But those who loved her could never forget her; two men carried about with them her little formal notes of courtesy, her portrait secretly commissioned, and were, when their ends came, buried with these souvenirs over their dead hearts.

With some of the men whom she met in Caen Mlle. de Corday permitted a reserved platonic affection; two of her friends she regarded with esteem, and when they were parted, one from the other, exchanged with them a long correspondence on matters of philosophy, politics and ethics.

These two gentlemen were M. Boisjungan de Maingré and M. Bougon Langrais. With both the attraction, on her part, was purely intellectual; she

admired them for their views, their conduct, their ideas, and nothing in her manner towards them, or in her correspondence with them, was tender, intimate or passionate.

M. Bougon Langrais was a high official of the departmental administration of Calvados, distinguished, cultured, delicate, imbued with the ideals of Greece and Rome; his manners were grave and amiable; he was twenty-seven, but his office and his disposition made him appear older than his years. M. Boisjungan de Maingré was a young nobleman whose acquaintance with Mlle. de Corday was brief; he left the country, returned, was caught with arms in his hand and shot as a proscribed *émigré* in 1792. This murder, like that of M. de Belzunce, deepened, if it were possible to deepen, Mlle. de Corday's horror of violence and anarchy, and accentuated her melancholy sense of the doom awaiting the young and the ardent in this epoch of terror.

Yet she had not loved, even in a romantic sense, either of these men; they were too far below her ideals. She resigned herself to celibacy; she did not wish to surrender her freedom to anyone. "Never," she wrote to a friend, "will you have to put 'Madame' on my letters, never will I renounce my precious liberty, my independence."

She believed that the only kind of marriage to which she could have submitted, the only kind of man to whom she could have given her sincere vows, was not to be found in the commonplace world she inhabited. She resigned herself, but this resignation added to the melancholy that increased daily behind her gaiety, her dutiful sweetness, her pious calm.

She had wished to devote all the ardours of her soul to God, but the convent doors had been closed to her; she had hoped there might be some sublime human passion on which she might bestow these enthusiasms—but she found no object worthy of what she knew she had to give. All the emotion, then, of which she was capable, was turned to love of her country.

In the spring of 1792 the profound disturbances that shook France were felt in Normandy, in Caen; several families of Madame de Bretteville's acquaintance decided to emigrate; others came in from the country to the protection of the town—their *châteaux* were being burnt, the peasants were rising, the government's authority daily weakened.

The family of Tournélis decided to leave Caen (a M. de Tournélis had been suggested as a possible husband for Mlle. de Corday), the family Loyer made preparations to go to Rouen; insecurity was felt everywhere. Madame de Bretteville was thrown into a pitiful state of alarm; she, too, wished to fly, but had not the courage to move. She was in such a nervous state that she could not bring herself to contemplate crossing the bridge of boats across the river—a *détour* by Paris was worse. Her friends could not persuade her to move; she remained, paralysed by terror, in her sombre rooms, with Minette and Azor, with the servants to whom she no longer dared to give orders, but who must be addressed as citizen and citizeness.

Mlle. de Corday wrote to her school friend, Mlle. Loyer, afterwards Madame Maromme, who had left Caen, of the pitiful condition of her aunt:

*"Would we had a magic ring with which to build*

*her a solid bridge! . . . If I were near you, I should again become your scholar and I should promise more attention to your lessons—perhaps then I should find, in the study of literature and of languages, in your friendship and that of your kind mother, forgetfulness of all the tediums (les ennuis) to which I have been a prey for so long. When the present offers nothing and there is no future one must take refuge in the past and look there for the ideal life that does not exist in reality.”*

To relieve these “tediums” she studied English and Italian, to try to be of some use she exerted herself in favour of the monks and nuns who were homeless and often penniless through the closing of the convents.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Madame de Bretteville gave a farewell dinner to such of her friends as had resolved to leave Caen and invited M. de Corday and his two children to join the party. François-Charles de Corday and the M. de Tournélis who had been a pretender to the hand of Charlotte were intending to join the army of Condé—“the old white flag of France” on the banks of the Rhine; the elder son, Jacques-François de Corday, was already at Coblenz.

M. de Corday received his daughter with the warmest affection which she eagerly returned; it was a charming family reunion; all disagreements and vexations were forgotten, all troubles too. Youth, gaiety, high spirits triumphed over everything, even over the fearful apprehensions of Madame de Bretteville and the sombre monotony of her mournful chambers. This youthful enthusiasm gave a rosy



illusion to the future, the young men spoke of their journey to the Rhine as of a pleasure trip, the women spoke of welcoming them back to an era of peace and prosperity.

One who was present has left a description of Mlle. de Corday as she was on that joyous evening, discussing with M. de Tournéris her beloved Rome and Sparta:

"She was ravishingly beautiful—I see her now before my eyes, wearing a dress of rose taffetas, striped with white, over a petticoat of white silk; her rich shape was marvellously set off by this *toilette* which suited her to perfection. A rose-coloured riband was threaded through her tresses and harmonised with the roses of her complexion, deeper than ordinary because of the meeting with her father and the excitement of finding herself in the midst of her family. She appeared, on that evening, an ideal creature."

One little incident only spoiled the harmony of that charming dinner party; the health of the King was given and Mlle. de Corday's glass was not raised; all glanced at her reproachfully, her father with severity; Madame de Loyer whispered to her not to refuse to drink to a King so virtuous. "I believe him good," replied Mlle. de Corday, blushing and in a low voice, "but what virtue is there in a weak King? He is nothing but a misfortune to his people."

Such, given some years later, was the opinion of Napoléon I.

The young girl refused to drink, and, after a moment's awkward silence, the light, gay talk was resumed. It was again disturbed and this time more seriously.

Bishop Fauchet, representing the *nouveau clergé constitutionnel*, took, this evening, his departure from Caen, enthusiastically supported by followers; he had been recently elected Bishop of Calvados, and had come to Saint-Pierre to preach on Christian charity and to oust the legitimate holder of the see. He was famous for his eloquence and frequently took as his text: "*Frères, les Français sont libres!*" or "*les tyrans sont morts!*"

The noise in the street broke up the dinner-party, everyone crowded to the window, and the two young royalists, M. de Corday and M. de Tournélis, wished to rush into the street to protest against the shouts of the mob acclaiming the revolutionary Bishop. The other guests drew them back from the window, Mlle. de Corday restraining in particular M. de Tournélis.

"A bravado of this sort might be fatal to us all!" she exclaimed.

"You," he replied, "offended everyone just now in order to be true to *your* sentiments when you refused to drink to the King. May I not avow mine?"

"My action," she said smiling, "could only compromise myself—yours would risk the lives of everyone about you!"

\* \* \* \* \*

With the departure of these friends from Caen and the return of her father to Argentan, Mlle. de Corday's life became even more quiet; there were so many mansions closed in the town; there were the convents and monasteries with "National property" daubed over them, there were fewer people to whom to talk, and there was the increasing terror of Madame

de Bretteville, the increasing isolation of the dark house. And always, from far and near, rumours of approaching insurrection, anarchy, invasion, a toppling government.

The lonely young girl wrote long letters to her departed friends, in particular to Mlle. de Loyer, her companion of school days, then at Rouen. They were sad letters, full of "*contempt for life, disdain of an existence without purpose, the complete disenchantment of a spirit that finds itself deceived after having cherished long and delicious illusions.*"

Speaking of the desolation in Caen, she wrote: "*If the grass does not grow in the streets it is because the season is not here—there is a general flight from the town and so we are at least in less danger of an insurrection.*" She had little hope of any good coming from the *émigrés* on the Rhine whom her two brothers had joined: "*They are not disciplined, but the ideal of liberty gives them some courage—and, at a pinch, despair will serve. . . . What fate awaits us? A fearful despotism—if they cannot control the people, we shall escape Charybdis only to be devoured by Scylla. There is nothing ahead but suffering—but lamentations do not help us.*"

These letters breathe nostalgia and resignation.

"*We are almost alone—what would you? I am charmed to think that you are happily domiciled again in your own country—for here we are menaced, any moment, with a revolt. One can only die once, and what fortifies me against the horrors of the situation is that no one will lose anything in losing me.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

Often Mlle. de Corday would sit in the shadows of her room as evening fell and listen to the sounds of a violin and clavecin that came from a neighbouring house. There was still, in the half deserted, menaced and frightened town, someone to make music. The lovely sounds fell soothingly on the fiery energy that burned behind her sad resignation and touched her dreams to gold. "Ah, had I lived then, I might have been happy, I might have been loved."

As Pauline dreamed of Severus Mlle. de Corday dreamed of some demi-god, grave, stately, gracious, posed for a sublime action; such a one would alone be worthy of her love. Love? She did not use the word, even in her thoughts; her soul was as virginal as her body, the ideal companionship that she imagined did not touch on an embrace, a kiss.

But the dream was poignant enough to make the reality bitter.

Sometimes, seated in that sombre, alien chamber, offered her out of a cold regard that was almost charity, listening to the music stealing in upon her, she wept, though all traces of tears were removed by the time she went downstairs to sit with Madame de Bretteville cowering in the winged-chair between Azor and Minette.

"You are crazy," one of her friends rallied her, "to think so much of the past——"

"Maybe," she smiled. "I wish that I had lived in the times of Sparta or Athens—then there were some courageous women."

\* \* \* \* \*

Almost the same process was taking place in the

soul of Adam Lux as he looked up from his Plutarch and Rousseau on the same world as that which met the sad gaze of Charlotte de Corday.

The young German had followed the progress of the revolution with zealous interest; for him it was exactly what it was for her, a glorious dawn, and he devoted himself, body and soul, to the principles of the Declaration of Rights. Active where she was inactive, he was a prominent *clubiste* and became well known in Mayence for his lively eloquence, his single-mindedness, his enthusiasm and his high ideals. "I have," he declared with perfect sincerity, "a violent hatred of tyranny and injustice under any form."

When war was declared, the sympathy of Lux, as that of many of his countrymen, was with the French; he wished Mayence to be attached to the great and splendid nation that would arise from the events of 1789, '90, '91.

"Nations have always been strongest when breaking their chains!" he cried; like the *Girondists*, whom he so greatly admired, he had the talent for the fine phrase, an endless flow of eloquence, a facile pen; "*paysan philosophique*," he described himself in the list of the members of the club to which he belonged, he encouraged his nephew to roam in the forest reading Ossian instead of studying—"sentiment is more useful in forming a man than is knowledge." But Adam Lux could be energetic; he took a definite part in the politics of Mayence, which was beginning to affect his own modest affairs.

In September, 1792, he wrote to his sister-in-law that his finances were nearly exhausted, that the taxes

were being increased, that the oppression of the government was in crying contradiction to the new political doctrines, that clumsy means were being taken to deceive the people, while the forced levies of recruits were causing grave discontent.

In October, 1792, General Comte Adam Custine, at the head of the French republican troops, took possession of Mayence; Adam Lux was among those who received him with applause. His friends advised him to return to his farm and not to meddle in public affairs which seemed so dark and so uncertain—after all, the golden age might not be so near, the King of France was in peril of his life in Paris, and the *Gironde* was weakening before the Mountain. Adam Lux replied in those terms of antique simplicity that would have pleased Mlle. de Corday:

“Even if we fail—or perish, our efforts will leave some result behind—when there are many seeds sown, some plants must come up. Posterity will blame those who remained idle in such a time as this—I do not wish to incur that blame.”

He soon became one of the most powerful, impressive and popular orators of the club and used his considerable influence in favour of the French. Custine appointed a Provisional Administration for Mayence, and this passed a resolution that the electorate should be united to France under the name of the department of Bouches-du-Rhin.

Adam Lux and several of his friends were entrusted with the task of touring the country to induce the inhabitants to vote for France. In his own village he set up the tree of liberty, helped by the pastor and a young student, while the country people went up to

the town hall to inscribe in a red book "the names of free men." Lux's eloquence was so effective that out of two hundred and twenty-three people, two hundred and thirteen signed, and the following memorial was sent to Custine:

"Our shepherd has left his flock without help, the German Empire has neither force nor power, the Emperor cannot even defend the Low Countries, and we accept the fraternity offered us by the victorious French, as long as they show themselves true friends and undertake to give the people a sound government."

Returning to Mayence, Lux wrote and lectured in the cause of France, being particularly successful in gaining converts among his friends, professors and students at the university.

A Convention for the Rhine Province, in imitation of that of Paris, being decided upon, Lux took a prominent part in the elections. At Spire he and his colleagues met with some opposition, and the French commandant had to bring cannon into the street before the inhabitants were persuaded that they wished to be annexed to France. But the eloquence, obvious sincerity, good faith and personal charm of the young man did much towards inclining the electors to accept this new form of government. Nor did his zeal stop at speeches; in virtue of the decree that ordered the removal of "*tous les restes du despotisme*," he made it his business to see that all the armorial bearings on the noble houses at Spire were removed.

When the *Convention rhéno-germanique* was elected Adam Lux took his seat as deputy for the

village of Volxheim. The first act of the Convention was to vote all the country between Landau and Bingen "free," *i.e.*, of the Emperor and the Elector. Adam Lux rose to suggest that this little republic, *Convention national des Allemands libres*, should be incorporated with the French Republic.

This was in March, 1793. Louis XVI had been beheaded in January and his fearful cry as he was swung under the guillotine knife had echoed throughout Europe, raising indignation and horror in all feeling hearts. Raising doubt as to the future, too—the *Gironde* could not save the King; could they save themselves?

And if the *Gironde* went, who would stem the tide of anarchy?

Charlotte de Corday wept when she learned of the death of the man whose toast she had refused to honour. She wrote thus to Mlle. Rose Fougerson du Foyot:

*"You have heard the frightful news, my dear Rose, and your heart, as mine, must have trembled with indignation—France is indeed delivered over to the scoundrels who have already done us such harm. God knows when this will stop. I know your sentiments and so can write freely what I think. I shudder with horror and indignation. Such an event prepares us for the most frightful possibilities in the future. It is obvious that nothing more unhappy could have happened. I am almost reduced to envy those among our relations who have left the country, so much do I despair of the return of that tranquillity which, only a little while ago, I thought possible. Everyone who*



## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

*could have given us liberty is being assassinated. These men are mere butchers! Weep for the fate of our poor France. I know that you are very sad and I would not increase your sorrows by a recital of mine. All my friends are being persecuted and my aunt subjected to all sorts of trouble, because it is known that she sheltered Delphin [Mlle. de Corday's uncle, Delphin Boussaton de Belleisle] when he passed through here on his way to England. I should follow him if I could. But God keeps us here for other destinies. . . . We are here a prey to brigands of all colours, they leave no one in peace, it is enough to give one a horror of this Republic . . . in brief, after this terrible blow [execution of the King] which frightens the universe, pity me, my dear Rose, as I pity you, as I pity myself, for there is no generous and sensitive heart that must not weep tears of blood."*

Adam Lux, not so near the centre of affairs, did not see so clearly as Charlotte de Corday; still not disillusioned, he, a few weeks after she wrote this letter, thus addressed the Convention in Mayence:

"Oh, my country, without France you resemble a feeble orphan who will soon be enslaved by his neighbours and by strangers! But, see! A tender and powerful mother offers to adopt you—she assures you that she will fulfil towards you all maternal duties—do not hesitate, then, to run to her arms! Brothers, long live the French Republic!"

The resolution of union with France was passed with acclamation in the *Convention rhéno-germanique* and Mayence saw herself, in the glowing words

of Adam Lux, as part of a *masse redoutable* opposed to a coalition of despots.

Lux, Forster and Pocki were sent to Paris to carry the decree to the Convention. On March 30th the three Germans appeared before the Senate (as it was to them) and the President, Jean Debret, gave them the kiss of fraternity. Afterwards they were received warmly at the Jacobin Club, where they swore to live as republicans or to die.

Their duty accomplished, they wished to return to Mayence, but the German army blocked the way; everything was, indeed, as Lux had been warned by his friends it might be, dark and uncertain.

The *Montagne* was beginning to mutter that the Girondists were agents of Pitt and Coburg, the loyalty of the Gironde General, Dumouriez, victor of Jemappes and Valmy, was suspected. Did he wish, under the excuse of avoiding anarchy, to make the young Duc de Chartres, son of "Citizen Prince" (the *duc d'Orléans*), King? These, the bitterest of the bitterest questions of the moment, disturbed the Assembly and distracted the people.

The three deputies from Mayence were thus reduced to inactivity and poverty; when news came through the blockaded routes Lux learned that his little property at Kostheim had been burnt, Forster that his had been threatened. The Convention allowed them each, in *assignats*, twenty-eight livres a week; with the *louis d'or* at a hundred livres it was not much, but the young Germans contrived to live on it in their modest *hôtels*.

Adam Lux lived with Forster in the *hôtel des patriotes hollandais, rue des Moulins*. He talked with

the other Germans he found in Paris : Oelsner, Kerner ; he wandered in the *Bois de Boulogne* with his Rousseau, his Plutarch, his newspaper ; he mused and dreamed under the shade of an oak or by a lake—there was nothing else for him to do. “His brow was without a cloud, his voice tranquil and thoughtful, and his serious glance was full of a brilliant serenity, the reflection of the calm of his soul,” wrote his friend Kerner.

The young German, musing in the woods and fields outside Paris, had come to where he was to meet Charlotte de Corday, of whom, as yet, he had not heard.

She, too, in this month of April, 1793, took a step along the road that was to bring them together.

On April 8th, she procured a passport in order to visit her father at Argentan ; on April 23rd she accompanied a friend, Madame de Beaumont, to the town hall ; this lady decried a passport for Paris. Mlle. de Corday decided to have hers *viséd* for the capital, in case of need. This passport read :

“Allow to pass the citizeness Marie Cordai [*sic*] native of Mesnil-Imbert, domiciled at Caen department of Calvados, twenty-four years old, height five feet one inch [*cinq pieds une pousse*], hair and brow chestnut [*châtains*], eyes grey, forehead high, nose large, mouth medium, chin round, cleft [*fourchu*], face oval. Give all assistance she may require in case of need on her route to Argentan.

“Given at ‘*la Maison Commune de Caen*,’ April 8th, 1793, the II<sup>nd</sup> year of the French Republic, by me, Fossey, the elder, registrar [*greffier*].

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GENTLEWOMAN

"Signed by me, the clerk and the said Citizeness Corday.

"Marie Corday.

"Henri, clerk."

The visa ran: "Passed at Caen, for a journey to Paris, April 23rd, 1793, the II<sup>nd</sup> year of the Republic—Euguelland, registrar."



FOUR

ENTHUSIASM

“Faut-il un Curtius, qui, en se précipitant, sauverait la chose publique? Le voici! J’essaierai si ma mort peut vous rappeler à vos devoirs! Malheureux représentants d’un peuple dont le bonheur est mon dernier soupir, ayez le courage de punir les fourbes, de venger la représentation nationale et de sauver la liberté ou de mourir à mon exemple!”

*Adam Lux. Paris, Avril, 1793.*

“Meurs s’il y faut mourir, en citoyen romain,  
Et par un beau trépas couronne un beau dessein.”

*Cinna. P. Corneille.*

“O Emile! où est l’homme de bien qui ne doit rien à son pays quel qu’il soit, il lui doit ce qu’il y a de plus précieux pour l’homme, la moralité de ses actions et l’amour de la vertu.”

*Emile. J. J. Rousseau.*

THE "brilliant serenity" of Adam Lux was soon disturbed; he had not been more than a few days in Paris before he began to feel a strange uneasiness. A bitter disillusionment began to creep over the dreams that had been so bright. Was this the Republic modelled on Sparta, Athens, Rome? Were these the senators who aspired to be Catos or Ciceros? Where was a Cincinnatus, a Brutus, a Manlius, a Gracchus? Where in this great city, where half the inhabitants were famishing, where vice was flamboyant, where there was little law or order, where all the elegance, authority and dignity of the *ancien régime* had been swept away, but all its squalor, injustice, folly remained, was that ideal government which, viewed from the banks of the Rhine, had seemed so dazzling?

In April, 1793, Paris was a city calculated to dispel the most obstinate of romantic dreams. The nobility, who had given the capital all its brilliancy, all its purpose and importance, had disappeared; they had either been murdered, emigrated to the army of Condé, or lay hid with impudent cunning in some poor lodging, garret or cellar, where they contrived to evade the inefficient police that intermittently searched for them and only occasionally caught them.

All the palaces, all the great *hôtels* that had been the scenes of so much elegant, charming and expensive life, were closed, most of them sacked, with "National property" daubed over the walls. The churches were shut, dismantled, the convents and



monasteries deserted, but the brothels and gambling hells were open. In the *ci-devant Palais Royal* (*Palais Egalité*) every species of luxury and vice was eagerly traded in; men of every shade of political opinion tried to forget their danger, their hopes, their misery with drink, with the cards, with debauchery. The *filles publiques* often concealed, in the rooms a Republican paid for, some mocking noble whose vast mansion stood empty a few yards away.

Much had been destroyed—what was to take its place?

The bright promise had not been fulfilled. Adam Lux could not forget that ten thousand prisoners had been murdered by “a handful of scoundrels” in ’91, nor the King, who, to the horror of the nation, had been brutally sacrificed—nor men like the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, first and most enlightened of the Liberal peers, who had been assassinated at Gisors. From all over the country came tales of blood and fire, wrong and misery. Where, in such a scene, was there room for the “goodness of man,” the moral law, the peaceful rustic felicity imagined by J. J. Rousseau, or those sublime virtues which the intellectuals of 1787 had inherited from Greece and Rome?

Adam Lux looked with despair even at those whom he had most admired, the true Republicans, the men of antique mould, the cultured idealists of the *Gironde*. He had soon been disillusioned with the *Jacobins*; he attended only one of their meetings, where he found nothing talked of but atrocities; and his attendance at the meetings of the Convention, which then had moved from the *salle de manège* in the “palace of liberty” to a gloomy Medicean room in the *Tuileries*,

the gorgeous palace of the Bourbons, so recently the scene of bloody fighting, brought him no greater satisfaction.

With famine at the door and the enemy on the frontier, an insurrection in La Vendée and no settled system of government, the meetings of the representatives of the people could be no other than confused and stormy, bitter and violent.

The external situation, to which enthusiasts like Adam Lux and Mlle. de Corday gave no thought, was appalling. England blockaded the coast, Spain held the Pyrenees, Austria was menacing on the Alps, Russia with the Netherlands was ready to strike on the Northern frontier; it was reckoned in Paris that nearly three hundred thousand men were in arms against the One and Indivisible Republic. Added to these threats and dangers, which might indeed appear overwhelming to a country in a state of chaos, was the doubt, strongly felt by many, as to the loyalty of Dumouriez, the Republican General who had saved France at Valmy and Jemappes. He was of the party of the *Gironde*, he was suspected of resenting the execution of the King, the rigorous imprisonment of the Queen, and it was declared by his enemies that not only was he plotting to put the crown on the head of the young Duc de Chartres, whose father, *Philippe le Rouge*, sat on the Left, but that he was prepared to sell France to the Allies.

Anxiously Adam Lux searched the benches of the senate for the man of antique virtue and sublime courage who should save not only France but Europe, not only Europe but civilisation. Keenly he scanned the ranks of the *Gironde*; he found nothing to blame

in their principles, their behaviour, nothing to scorn in their talents; he thought them worthy, by their merits, their gifts, to found and sustain a free State. But their inaction troubled him; he feared that they were in danger of being overwhelmed; sitting after sitting that he attended passed in furious disputes, bitter reproaches, maddening confusions.

Houssman, formerly Commissioner of the Convention to the Rhine country (*le pays rhénan*), introduced Adam Lux to several members of the *Mountain*; he admired their ferocious sincerity, their republican zeal, but he was repelled by their violence and mistrusted their judgment; soon he was attached: "*par un noble lien, par l'amour ardent et désintéressé de la République*" to the *Gironde*.

The ardent young man, himself comely, eloquent, who had never had an evil thought and who was inspired by such altruistic principles, found it easy to admire and to idealise many of the striking personalities of the Right. He was not fortunate in obtaining their notice. The virtuous Roland had no leisure for the ardent foreigner who also escaped the attention of the fair and fervent Manon; had Madame Roland's glance fallen at this period on the young enthusiast from Mayence, she might have found him not unworthy of a place in the heart which was so warmly disposed towards Barbaroux and Buzot.

Adam Lux contrived, however, to gain the acquaintance of Jérôme Pétion and Elie Guadet; from these two members of the *Gironde* the eager German endeavoured to discover the opinion of their party on the future of the Convention and of France.

He was rebuffed by the civil evasions of the two

deputies, who were not disposed to admit him into their confidence.

Pétion and Guadet were, indeed, in a state of acute anxiety; in common with the other members of the Right they saw the country falling into complete anarchy, with the encouragement of the terrible *Mountain*, and at last, after months of speeches, writing, debate, argument, they found themselves face to face with action—crude, violent, horrible, which they feared would overwhelm them.

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The situation that Adam Lux viewed closely Mlle. de Corday saw only from a distance, through the medium of journals, pamphlets, from the lips of those few acquaintances she had who came and went from Paris to Caen.

But her reaction was the same as his; from her reading and listening she put together the same picture as did Lux, almost a daily spectator of the sittings of the Convention, and, like the German, she cherished a great hatred and a great admiration: hatred for the infernal forces led by Danton, Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat, Couthon, Hébert; admiration for the *Girondists* who were making a stand against them.

In April came terrible news to a country that seemed already too wretched for any further misfortune to befall. General Dumouriez, Commander-in-Chief of the Republican forces, endeavoured to desert with his army to the enemy. His troops refused to follow him and he fled, with less than two thousand of his men, to the Austrian headquarters at Tournay.

France was, therefore, without any organised

defence and the most bitter taunts were thrown by the *Montagne* at the *Gironde*—traitors, spies of Coburg and of Pitt, Royalists at heart—cries of all others most calculated to inflame a populace hungry, lawless, dreading a foreign invasion and the return of out-cast masters panting for vengeance.

The Left, in full assembly, led a furious onslaught on the Right. "Brissot and Gensonné must taste the guillotine—that's a dance they must learn," shrieked Carrier. Danton, counter-attacked by the *Gironde*, replied by hurling the whole force of his gigantic personality against them, vigorously aided by his bilious lieutenant, the heavy-browed Camille Desmoulins, who published his famous invective, *Histoire des Brissotins*, of which 4,000 copies were sold in a few days. Jean-Paul Marat went still further: in spite and invective as a deputy for Paris, as President of the Jacobins, secretary to the Commune, he had rapidly acquired power and was fast approaching the apogee of his fame, power and fame that the poor doctor, sweating over his battles with the Academics, the proscribed journalist starving in his damp cellar, had enviously dreamt of but hardly hoped to realise.

He named himself, after his now successful journal, *L'ami du peuple*, and the very dregs of the populace gave him that glory he had tried to grasp from Kings, nobles, savants. All his bile, his fury, his egotism, his frustration, his disappointment, found vent in this cause—the cause of all the despised and mocked of humanity. True type of the *enragé* or low agitator of the Paris gutters, Marat was adored by his followers.

"The just rage of the people"; his self-description

was true enough; he did represent the rage, jealousy and vengeance of those who had nothing against those who had much, and represented it with an awful sincerity. The filthy condition of his person that he had once allowed through neglect, he now purposely encouraged in order to flatter the vilest of the vile by degrading himself to the lowest level. His agonising skin disease had increased to such an extent that it was commonly believed that he had a leprosy; his whole body was covered by a foul eruption, a scrofula (*prurigo de Hébra*, or eczema); this disease and the arthritis that accompanied it were beyond the power of Souterbielle, the skilful doctor who dressed Robespierre's ulcerated leg every day in secret, to cure or even alleviate. In that April of his triumph Marat was a doomed if not a dying man, and the fury that possessed him had the fearful power of the insanity produced by the torment of his body and the passion of his mind. Before the horrified imagination of Charlotte de Corday this loathsome figure that seemed the embodiment of anarchy was raised with the force of a vision from the infernal regions.

The little man with the huge head and mask that might have been that of murder personified, with the brow of the philosopher, covered with greasy, verminous black hair and bound with a dirty rag soaked in vinegar, with his scabby limbs covered with filthy clothes, his bandaged legs thrust into broken boots, two pistols in his sash, vituperation, denunciation, abuse on his livid lips, seemed indeed to symbolise the Terror, that appeared about to overtake France and to efface for ever the ideals of the patriots.

The German poet, Klopstock, who represented

emphatically and faithfully the feelings—from wildest enthusiasm to deepest horror—of his countrymen regarding the French Revolution, wrote as an expression of his most profound disgust: "Who is, what is, this nation that makes a god of the hideous Marat?" And he imagined and described an orgy truly terrible in the blackened, foul rooms of the Jacobin club, where the *clubistes* honoured Marat "after the fashion of the Hottentots," with the names of "tiger-cat, porcupine, hyena, eagle," while they celebrated the coming of the reign of terror, expressed by Klopstock in a huge portmanteau word after the fashion of Aristophanes, meaning, briefly, Republic of the guillotine, of the City, of the Mountain, and of the Club, "Klubergmunicipalguillotinoligoquatiererepublik."

Under this sinister, half-symbolic aspect, as a creature too dreadful to be believed in, as a symbol too horrible to be understood, did Adam Lux and Mlle. de Corday see Jean-Paul Marat.

Yet apart from the meaningless fanaticism of the mob's idolatry there were some who loved this stricken, terrible creature.

Simonne Evrard continued to adore the man to whom she had plighted her vows before Heaven, to tend his repulsive disease, to dress his putrid sores, to mix the almond water that eased his feverish thirst, to fill the bath in which he sat continually to relieve the fire in his blood, to run his wretched home.

Neither Marat nor his followers were any more capable than the *Girondists* of formulating a definite plan of government, or even of knowing what they wanted. None of them had *le tact de chose possible*;

if the King had stumbled to his doom with "the diadem over his eyes," these Republicans certainly had the Phrygian cap pulled over theirs; not one of them knew where he was going. It is to be doubted if Marat cared; *Rousseauiste* as he was, he had discarded the Genevan's Utopia for the pressing need of the moment—to destroy, to sweep away all who opposed, all who criticised, all who roused his envy, jealousy or hatred.

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On April 10th, 1793, Jean-Paul Marat, with all the force of his infuriated spite, accused the *Girondists* of being traitors to France and of having tried to save "the tyrant" (Louis XVI) by that "appeal to the people" for which some had voted.

The Right, roused at last to action, in their turn charged the deputy of Paris with incitement to murder and secured his arrest. While the case of Marat was being referred to the Revolutionary Tribunal, the Commune, under whose particular charge Marat as secretary and representative to the Convention was, exclaimed in fury that they would make the *Gironde* "*retomber dans son vomissement*." They excited the people by proclaiming that there were thousands of empty stomachs in Paris and that all the Gironde offered these starving wretches was some fine sentences from the classics.

There was much justice in the ferocious complaint; the people, caring nothing for Rousseau, Plutarch, Brutus, or any kind of Utopia, took up the cry, and backing the Commune, gave it the power of might. On April 18th, Jean-Nicolas Pache, the



newly-elected Mayor of Paris, son of a Swiss porter, appeared at the bar of the Convention: "The fruits of the earth," he declared in demanding the vote of the *maximum* (that the taxes should not pass a certain point), "like the air, belong to all."

It was a doctrine as popular as it was fallacious and dangerous—*les Romains* of the Left, who had talked so much about Liberty, had no reply to make.

The Commune, fully aware of its power and backed by the clubs and the famished people, pressed the Tribunal to acquit Marat. The *maximum* was voted, the power of the Convention destroyed.

Adam Lux was present at the frightful scenes which celebrated the acquittal of Marat on April 23rd. The demagogue, the idol and the hope of the mob of Paris, was carried on the shoulders of his frantic admirers from the *Palais de Justice* to the *Tuileries*, his rags fluttering about him, a wreath of laurels over his soiled *foulard*, a grin of exultation on his dark, tormented face. This grim caricature of a Cæsarean triumph swept into the Assembly hall. Marat, dirt, sores, fury, laurels, rags, was placed on his seat, while his terrible and tattered bodyguard danced and sang the *carmagnole* on the floor before him, making a hideous music with clattering wooden shoes and hoarse whistles and shouts.

Adam Lux was only one of many who gazed on this grotesque scene with fascinated dismay. There was a sickly pallor on the faces of the members of the Right as Marat rose to speak, the vast Centre remained silent, uneasy, as *l'ami du peuple* was swept away to a complete apotheosis in the club of the Jacobin.

It needed no great clearness of vision to see that the

Commune, the mob, and men like Marat, were leading the forces of anarchy against any attempt at sane government, exploiting the fear and poverty of the people, for their own ambitions.

But Adam Lux comforted himself; he still believed in the power of the Gironde to affront even this terrible situation.

Leaving the ill-kept, severely-policed streets, where there was nothing to be seen but vice, misery, famine and ruin, he would still turn into the woods outside the city to breathe the fresh air, to rest beneath the budding trees, to watch the resting birds and breathe the delicate perfume of the first flowers.

In these quiet hours his old serenity would return and he would refuse to believe that this great, glorious and successful enterprise could be ruined by a handful of the frantic mob. So, too, Charlotte de Corday, wandering in the old elm avenue near the convent where she had prayed and mused so long, with her two-day-old newspaper in her work-bag, would dream that it might still be possible for France to be saved.

In the evening Adam Lux, living like an anchorite on his poor pension, would muse in his modest chamber as Mlle. de Corday would muse in her sombre room, in the hands of each a Rousseau or a Plutarch, in the heart of each a fear slowly overcoming a hope.

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When the *Commission de Douze* was formed by the efforts of the *Gironde* to punish those who disturbed the business of the Convention, Adam Lux felt his hope revive. He was ready to hail joyously a return

to order and tranquillity; no longer would the ex-valet Hanriot, "general" of the people, be able to surge round the *Tuileries* screaming: "Down with the *Gironde*!" no longer would a stream of obscene and infamous libels be allowed to issue from the press of the *Mountain* and the *Jacobin*. Indeed, the first act of the Twelve was to arrest Hébert, who edited one of the most offensive of these gutter rags, *Le Père Duchêne*. Such a tumult followed, however, that the *Gironde* had to suppress the *Douze*, but only to reappoint it the next day. This was a signal for an insurrection. Hanriot and his ragged army again surrounded the *Tuileries*; the *Girondists* could do no more, they had in vain used eloquence. One of the qualities they had never lacked, courage, they showed abundantly; but it did not save them against the Commune, against the Paris mob so skilfully inflamed to fury, against Danton and the revengeful passion of Jean-Paul Marat.

On the evening of May 30th Adam Lux and his fellow-Germans were roused by the sound of the tocsin; when they ran into the streets they found the barriers closed, the people being called to arms. It was an insurrection engineered by the *Jacobins*, the Commune against the *Girondists*. Soldiers were being raised at forty *sous* apiece—the adventurer Hanriot was their general. It was a night of nightmarish horror and alarm. The more prominent members of the *Gironde* believed that they were about to be massacred. They made no attempt, however, to hide, and early in the morning several presented themselves in the former theatre of the *Tuileries*, to which the sittings of the Convention had been moved.

Adam Lux and his compatriots watched with admiration and apprehension these pale, resolute figures, which seemed to them to represent the sole hope of civilisation; the theatre was empty save for three *Montagnards* when the *Girondists* arrived; one was Danton.

"Nothing has happened," he said tranquilly; but the doomed deputies were not deceived.

"Look," whispered the novelist Louvet to Elie Guadet, "at his hideous expression—one sees what he is hoping." Then, true to Plutarch:—"Doubtless this is the day when Clodius will exile Cicero."

As the chamber filled, Pache, Mayor of Paris, brought the assurance that the revolt was nothing and that he was responsible for law and order, but even as he spoke the sound of the cannon fired by Hanriot's communists filled the *Tuileries*. Soon after, a deputation, heavily armed, marched to the bar and protested the grievances of the people. Elie Guadet, who was the secretary to the Convention, and who had calmly mounted to his desk, answered boldly and declaimed against the miserable situation of the capital, "fallen into the hands of a group of agitators," and demanded, who had dared to sound the tocsin and fire the cannon? Couthon, the paralytic, who wheeled himself into the Assembly in his chair of yellow velvet, violently defended the action of the Commune and attacked the *Douze*. The mob that had pushed into the room supported him with yells of hatred against the Right. The day proceeded in wearisome confusion; it was a cynical illustration of Hérault de Séchelles' ironic remark: "The voice of reason and that of the people are the same thing"—for in this mob

law the voice of reason could not be for one second heard.

In the midst of the hideous tumult Robespierre, suave, meek, rose and began to accuse the *Gironde* in vague, involved phrases.

"Make an end!" cried Pierre Vergniaud contemptuously.

The air was suffocating, foul; every entry to the theatre, once the scene of elegant pleasure and charming leisure, was blocked by armed, furious and implacable people; the atmosphere was electric with hysteria.

"I'll end—against you," said Robespierre, and demanded the heads of the Right.

The Convention, that is the Right, feebly supported by the timorous Centre, resisted, but towards ten o'clock, exhausted in mind and body, the deputies consented to dissolve the *Douze*.

Adam Lux, half-fainting from fatigue and chagrin, forced his way out into the streets, which were crudely illuminated for the "triumph of the people."

The following day, June 1st, was a Sunday, and a haggard truce lay over the dishevelled city. Adam Lux wandered abroad with death in his heart, the bitterness of his disillusion amounted almost to insanity, he lost all sense of proportion, of reality, of the logical sequence of events, of half-shades, he saw all in black and white, the forces of evil overcoming the forces of good. As he walked, at random and half-dazed, through Paris, a proclamation placarded on the walls met his eyes:

"Citizens, remain on the alert—the dangers of the country are your supreme law."

Hanriot was reorganising his ragged and ferocious forces. Some of them were to be sent to crush the revolt in La Vendée, others remained to overawe the capital.

Jean-Paul Marat, who had been the focus and the figure-head of the mob fury from the first, was not yet satisfied with his victory. Exhausted as he was from the long, agitated sitting of May 31st, burning with fever, his aching brows bound with a rag freshly moistened by the anxious hands of Simonne Evrard, *l'ami du peuple* escaped from the care of his women-folk, made his way to the *Hôtel de Ville* and, creeping into the belfry, with his own hands rang the tocsin. This dreadful sound, which seemed like the very voice of Marat demanding blood, struck with terror into the ear of the young deputy from Mayence. In all this frenzy of horror he had had only one consolation—the spectacle of Madame Roland, dauntless, indignant, pushing through the vile crowd to the bar of the Convention and protesting against the arrest of her husband; her courage was useless, she was herself arrested.

Only by some such act of “antique” virtue and courage could he, Adam Lux, relieve his agony of dismay and disappointment.

The Revolution of June 2nd surged round him. On the reopening of the Convention an armed crowd surged again round the *Tuilleries*; a new petition, demanding a decree against the *Douze*, was brought forward—these were accused of being “*les correspondants de Dumouriez*.” While the *Gironde* was evading the petition by referring it to a Committee, the men of action were preparing to sweep

away finally the men of words. Hanriot's scarecrow battalions took up their position round the *château*, upon which, by midnight, sixty pieces of artillery were trained; eighty thousand men guarded all the entries to the *Tuilleries*.

The proscribed members of the Gironde amounted to twenty-two; all bore themselves with that haughty courage which they so admired in their antique models. Especially distinguished by their proud bearing were Charles Barbaroux, who had led another assault on the *Tuilleries* not so long before; Lanjuinais, one of the ablest of the Moderates; Isnard, Lanthenas, the *abbé* Fauchet, whom Charlotte de Corday had watched from the window in Caen and Dussaulx.

Thus assailed on all sides, facing the frightful fate of mob massacre, the "suspect" *Girondists*, twenty-two against hundreds of thousands, preserved their dignity and their spirit. Lanjuinais, raising his voice above a storm of cat-calls, even had the courage to take the offensive, accused his enemies of their obvious crimes and refused to sit down until he had finished his indignant speech. The mob yelled: "We come to denounce you for the last time!" The *Gironde*, followed by the silent and overawed Centre, passed to the order of the day; the crowd, led by the *Montagnards*, rushed from the room shouting: "To arms!"

Bertrand Barère, "the Anacreon of the guillotine," rose, suggesting that the accused deputies should resign to save themselves from a worse fate. Lanjuinais and Barbaroux were heard amid the excitement refusing to accept this chance of ignoble safety.

"I have sworn to die at my post," said the handsome deputy. "I shall keep my word."

His famous beauty and his courage were extremely effective, but did not help his party.

The Convention was silenced by a rebuke addressed to Chabot by Lanjuinais; the *Girondists* had lost everything save their bravery and their wit. When the gross ex-Capuchin friar, rudely insulted the *Gironde*, Lanjuinais smiled: "The priest sacrifices the victim, Chabot—he does not mock him."

Jean-Marie Hérault de Séchelles, the handsome and elegant Norman noble who was President of the Convention, was at a loss, he sat composed, but mute. The Centre remained "in a stupor."

Two deputies who had tried to leave the *château* were driven back by Hanriot's soldiers; they showed their torn clothes to their colleagues when they returned in indignation and fear.

Barère then suggested that "to prove that we are free" the Convention should continue their deliberations in the midst of the Revolutionary army; this bizarre proposal was accepted. Hérault, cool, polite and impressive, wearing his hat, led the deputies out of the *château* and halted them in front of Hanriot's line of cannon.

This fantastic general, a little, gross, foul-mouthed man, ex-valet, ex-public-house keeper, rode a black horse and was half eclipsed by his enormous hat with the grotesque panache of the tricolour plumes; as the deputies advanced bare-headed he grimaced with insolent triumph.

Hérault, with admirable courage, demanded to know what the people wished.

"Not words," was the reply, "but twenty-two criminals."



"Take us all!" replied such of the deputies as could hear this menace.

Hanriot's reply was to order his gunners to their cannon. The deputies backed, divided into small groups, tried to find a way out of their intolerable position, if only a return to the *château*. With yells of mockery the *sans-culottes* shouted: "Long live the *Mountain!* To the guillotine with the *Gironde!*"

The deputies still endeavoured to escape from this insane enemy; at one point they had almost forced their way out of the gardens of the *Tuileries*, but Marat, with a formidable bodyguard, met them and savagely drove them back with the insulting cry: "I order you all to your posts, which you have left in so cowardly a fashion!"

Neither wit, eloquence, elegance nor courage could save the *Girondists*; they became, as unarmed men must become when hustled by brute force, ridiculous, humiliated; with Marat yapping like a hell-hound at their heels, and amid the bestial laughter of the *sans-culottes*, they were herded back to the Assembly room, where Couthon, babbling with hate, in ferocious accents, greeted them with coarse irony and demanded the arrest of the twenty-two members.

A *Girondist* flung out contemptuously: "Couthon is thirsty—give him a glass of blood!"

Marat sprang up and gave out, with zest, with joy, with unctuous cruelty, the names of the twenty-two deputies; Lanjuinais, Rabaud, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Guadet, Isnard, Barbaroux, Pétion, Brissot, Gorsas, Louvet, all republicans, ardent disciples of liberty—the list went on, mouthed over by those terrible grimacing lips, livid with pain and fury, to the

accompaniment of hoarse cries of triumph from the Mountain.

The twenty-two were sacrificed; while the Left voted their arrest, the overawed Centre was silent; the exhausted deputies left at last the *sénat* that had become their prison; with yells of joy the *sans-culottes* withdrew their cannon, insulting the deputies as they pushed through the mass.

The Convention was subverted; the Commune and Marat ruled in Paris; the first reign of terror was in sight.

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Adam Lux made no attempt to disguise his furious despair; his one wish was to die beside the virtuous and heroic deputies of the *Gironde*. His agony was extreme, because he had helped to persuade his own country to join this, as it had then seemed to him, great and noble Republic. He had come to Paris in joy and triumph, full of zeal for all that was good and sublime, expecting to see Rousseau's ideals being followed, the antique models copied, and instead—bloody anarchy! The true Republicans, outraged, insulted, dragged to death, while monsters like Couthon and Marat, intriguers like Danton and Robespierre, usurped the benches of the *sénat*!

Private griefs helped to swell the miseries of the young German. He learned from the newspapers that his country had been overwhelmed by the invaders; the village where he had planted the tree of liberty was in ashes, his little home razed to the ground; his family, he could only hope, had found a refuge in Mayence, but of this he had no certain news.

True to that enthusiasm which had always been the

mainspring of his actions, Adam Lux decided to rush to the bar of the Convention, denounce the *Mountain* in the most bitter terms and then blow out his brains. He believed that such an act would recall the country to reason and that the justice, common sense and courage of the majority would be roused by his sacrifice into turning against the bloody extremists who followed Marat.

This proposed suicide was not without precedent; in April an Englishman named Johnson, after publicly denouncing Marat, had struck himself with a dagger, declaring that he would not survive the triumph of anarchy.

It was not, however, of this friend of Tom Paine that Adam Lux was thinking so much as of Curtius, Decius, Brutus, the adored heroes of antiquity who had so calmly sacrificed themselves for their country.

His head on fire, the young German sat down in his poor room and wrote his farewell letters, to his wife, to his college friend, Nicolas Vogt, to Jean Dumont—he would await them all “in the sojourn of the immortals.”

This done, Adam Lux hastened out through the horrible disorder of Paris to find some members of the *Gironde* to whom he could confide his brilliant project. He was no longer troubled by the agonies of despair, of remorse, of disappointment; once he had made up his mind to die he felt calm, even joyous, as he had felt on the day when he had received his *doctorat* for the thesis on Enthusiasm, or when, like Cincinnatus, he had mused philosophy while guiding the plough. He chose Jérôme Pétion, once so popular,

and Elie Guadet, the brave secretary of the Convention, for his confidants. Both were expecting arrest when the deputy from Mayence read over to them the headings of the discourse that he proposed to read to the Convention before shooting himself.

This was a bold, sincere and impassioned attack on the *Mountain*, a warm defence of the *Gironde*, a warning as to the horrors of anarchy, an appeal to reason and justice, a reference to himself as the Curtius who would leap into the gulf, a warning as to the civil war likely to be relit in the provinces. The only practical suggestion was to make Roland or Brissot dictator—if practical any sane suggestion could be called in such a moment. Elie Guadet dissuaded his ardent supporter from suicide. Lux might leap into the gulf, but it would not close over him—if eloquence could have stemmed the tide the *Gironde* would have stemmed it; the *Mountain* would neither listen to Lux's discourse nor take any notice of his death—while his dead body was being dragged away, the sitting would continue. Reluctantly the young German relinquished his project, which had seemed to him so useful, so sublime, so brilliant. But he was persuaded by Pétion and Guadet that an appeal to the Convention, even if sealed by his blood, would be useless, and he turned his energies into the project of an appeal to the people, which should take the form of the inevitable pamphlet. Fired by this new labour of love he returned to his hotel to compose an *Avis aux citoyens français*.

While he was thus engaged the Revolution of June 2nd was completed. The Commune triumphed. Buzot, Pétion, Guadet, Isnard, Barbaroux, fled

secretly from Paris (the last already seized and escaping from his guards), and the other proscribed *Girondists* had been arrested; these included Brissot, Gensonné and Vergniaud, who disdained flight. With grim rapidity a new and wholly democratic constitution was formed, entitled "The Constitution of '93," which recognised the sovereignty of the people. So confused and shapeless was this hasty effort that the mocking Hérault suggested a search in the *Bibliothèque* for the laws of Minos as a guide; this suggested form of government was, however, suspended for a while owing to the unsettled state of the country. Barère said, "Its cradle will be its tomb," and a Dictatorship, vested in the Committee of Public Safety, of twelve members, was set up; each member governed, in theory at least, a twelfth part of France. One of the first laws they passed was that against *émigrés*; it was outlawry to attempt to leave the country, death to aid a fugitive. Marat became President of the dreadful Committee of the Commune. The principal cities of France and more than sixty departments rose against this government of the mob, but at first their revolt was only shown by bewildered murmurs that scarcely reached Paris.

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While Adam Lux, his long fair hair falling over his earnest brow, was seated at his table writing through the long summer day, half through the summer night by the light of a cheap candle, his "Advice to the French citizens," the spectacle of the "government" (Jacobin dictatorship) that speedily became known as *La Première Terreur*, shocked the world and

drove many sensitive and noble hearts besides that of the young German to despair.

From Paris itself came the voice of a poet, André Chénier, half a Greek and a warm lover of Greece, who had been a friend of Condorcet, an ardent supporter of '89, not much older than Lux, and as bitterly disillusioned: "It is cowardly to share the shame of this immense mob that one abhors so intensely in secret, but which, even by silence, one encourages and approves. Life is not worth so much disgrace—some day it shall be said there was a certain André Chénier who was one of a few whom neither general frenzy nor fear could force to bend the knee before crowned assassins, nor to take a seat at the table where the blood of men is drunk."

From Germany came the violent denunciation of Klopstock, with its vigorous image of Clubiofuria, this Alecto, this harpy, who has yet another name, the hideous name of Anarchy. Crowned with serpents and armed with a torch which scatters sparks of deadly fire, spitting poison, livid and misshapen, this fury sits in the French *sénat*, petrifying all with her ferocious menaces. Will, demanded Klopstock, these serpents never cease to hiss? Will Liberty ever return? Who will remove this monster, and when?

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Charlotte de Corday, in her sad room at Caen, asked herself this question. Two days later, she read in the papers, *Girondist*, *Jacobin*, of the events that Adam Lux had seen at first-hand while he was composing his pamphlet and rushing it through the press. She was, in the secrecy of her chamber, writing on

scraps of paper—"Shall I?"—"Shall I not?"—tearing them nervously across and throwing them down. Her agony of mind was acute, she could hardly command her serenity before the mean fear of Madame de Bretteville, the impassive loyalty of the servants.

She, too, saw the monster, and knew that it must be destroyed, but to her it did not have the face of Alecto or Anarchy, but that of Marat—the vile, the filthy, the hideous Marat who had been borne in triumph on the shoulders of the mob, Marat who had rung the tocsin inciting to murder and chaos, Marat who had yelled at the helpless, disarmed *Girondists*, driving them with insults back into the Assembly room where he had forced them to listen to his demand for blood, his demand for their heads as he checked them off one by one—Barbaroux, Lanjuinais, Guadet, Gensonné——

Charlotte de Corday took down her Bible and read the story of Judith; as Adam Lux thought of Curtius, she thought of the Hebrew heroine whom the Lord had made fair for His own purpose, and, with sad resolution, gazed at her own lovely face in the dusky glass of the tarnished mirror.

"Shall I?—Shall I not?"

Sleepless, she sat in the dusk, in the dark, her hands folded in her lap; none of her little convent-taught arts of sewing, painting, tapestry now served to distract her; there was no longer any relief in writing to her family, her friends. She was suddenly and utterly alone.

When, in the vast and sombre *salon* of her aunt she heard Madame de Grandchamp, an agitated visitor, repeat: "How is it these monsters are endured, all this

excess tolerated? Are there no longer any men?" Charlotte de Corday did not reply.

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The department of Calvados was one of those that instantly protested against the overthrow of the Convention and the government of the Committee of Public Safety. At Caen an Assembly to resist this new tyranny was formed, and by May 13th, 1793, Marat was already cited as *meneur de la révolution*, and after the arrest of the *Girondists* a manifesto from the Assembly at Caen sternly called upon the Mayor of Paris and all his "revolutionaries" to answer with their heads for the safety of the representatives of the people. As a further menace they arrested the two delegates of the Convention in Caen and (June 7th) sent ten Commissioners to Paris to report on the condition of affairs. When these returned with the news of the complete triumph of the extremists, Caen, in the name of the department of Calvados, declared utter hostility to this counter-revolution and incited the people to revolt against "murderers and brigands." The five *arrondissements* of the town formed a Federation, which met every evening to organise the resistance of Caen. As military leader they chose General Louis Félix, Baron de Wimpfen, a native of Minfeld, lower Rhine, who had distinguished himself in Gibraltar, who had played a moderate part in '89, and who, of good family and character, had continued after his retirement to reside on his Norman estate. Foremost among the *chefs civils* was Mlle. de Corday's friend, Bougon-Langrais, a true *Girondist* by reason of his delicate, cultured spirit, his integrity, his



eloquence and his inaction. Two parties distracted Caen, the *Royalists* and the *Girondists*. They were united only on one point—warm indignation against the *Mountain*, warm resolve to withstand them. For the rest all was scheme, counter-scheme, expectation, wonder, talk—only Mlle. de Corday, closely following her countrymen's deliberations, continued to murmur to herself: "Shall I?—Shall I not?"

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In this heavy atmosphere of rumour, suspicion, anger and brave resolve, came startling news; eighteen of the members of the *Gironde*, including some marked for arrest, had landed at Caen, led by the Norman, François-Nicolas-Léonard Buzot, Madame Roland's Saint-Preux. There were among the refugees the two deputies Adam Lux had consulted as to his project of suicide, Pétion and Guadet, and Lanjuinais, Bergoing, Boutidour, de Cussy, Duchâtel, Louvet, Salles, Valazé, Giroust, Lesage, Gorsas, Larivière, Meillan, Mallevault. The resplendent Barbaroux joined them later; three young journalists, Rouffe, Macherma and Girey-Dupré, accompanied the fugitives.

General Wimpfen was entrusted with lodging these illustrious refugees; he did not altogether trust them, and in order that he might be better able to observe them he accommodated them in the handsome *hôtel de l'Intendance* in the *rue des Carmes*, which opened into the *rue Saint-Jean* directly opposite 148, the house of Madame de Bretteville.

Wimpfen, a good soldier, but no politician, viewed with the dislike of a man of action these too eloquent

deputies ; his verdict was much the same as that of the Paris mob who had thrown them out—"they are only good to make speeches."

The *Girondists*, indeed, instantly proceeded to write and to talk ; they had a proclamation to the people of Caen drawn up, urging a march on Paris "to set up again the brilliant statue of Liberty." There was the adoption of a device, *les lois ou la mort* ; Salles wrote pamphlets that his friends said were worthy of Pascal ; diatribes against Marat, Hanriot, Robespierre were got together with ease, and one of Brissot's young journalists, Girey-Dupré, wrote some new verses for the *Marseillaise* which woefully lacked inspiration. This laboured poetry, which was full of laurels, tyrants, antique glory, the august rights of the people, etc., hailed Caen as the *Marseille du Nord* and sought to rouse Normandy to hurl herself on Paris, in order to revenge June 2nd ; the refrain was :

*"Aux Citoyens ! Terrassez les brigands !  
La loi, c'est le seul cri, c'est le vœu des Normands !"*

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From the window of her aunt's salon Mlle. de Corday could see the *Girondists* haranguing the crowds who gathered beneath the balcony of their *hôtel* ; if eloquence, force, quantity, fire and brilliancy of words could have restored the Right, these men would have done it ; their downfall and their peril had not quenched their ardour, had, indeed, given a fiery edge to it—nothing, on the surface, could have been better than their cause, nothing more outrageous than their wrongs. It would have been difficult, in the heat

of events, even to have brought home to them charges of incompetence, for if they had failed they could plausibly argue that no one could have succeeded in governing France when faced by the treachery, violence and self-seeking of the *Mountain*, who, for party purposes, had inflamed and unchained the basest of the populace.

As for their integrity and their sincerity, there could be no doubt in the mind of anyone not consumed by spite or prejudice. These were not spies of Coburg or Brunswick, tools of Pitt or the *émigrés*; they were convinced Republicans loyal to their principles, steadfast, brave, and merely overwhelmed by the forces of anarchy evoked by a handful of bloodthirsty ruffians. Under these favourable colours did the members of the *Gironde* appear not only to their own followers, but to all moderate-minded men; in contrast to the party which had overthrown them, they represented not only civilisation, but virtue. Their personalities were in their favour also; these young, cultured gentlemen, of good manners, attractive appearance and noble sentiment, were in sharp contrast to *ce vil Marat*, the spurious affectations of Robespierre, the coarse brutality of Danton, the dishevelled fanaticism of Couthon or Desmoulins. Their talents of oratory, of wit, of writing, gave them an air of brilliance, and there were among them some men, notably Buzot, Vergniaud and Barbaroux, splendidly decorative, whose handsome figures would have graced any party.

The admirers of the *Gironde* and those quiet, peace-loving people for whom they had represented some manners of stable government, were in no mood to remember the truth of the starving *sans-culottes*

complaints against them, that they had indeed shown no sign of any statesmanlike quality.

Nor was there anyone among the idealists to notice the good qualities of the brutal and emphatic government of "monsters," this terrible *Comité de Salut Public*, which by sheer tenacity was not only holding down a revolting country, but putting a vast army into the field against the invaders. They, too, had their grim heroism, their sombre sincerity, their implacable courage: "*C'est à coup de canon qu'il faut signifier la Constitution à nos ennemis*," cried Danton. "*C'est l'instant de faire ce grand et dernier serment que nous irons nous vouer tous à la mort ou que nous anéantirons les tyrans.*"

And there was something of the antique grandeur so beloved of the *Gironde* in Barère's image: "*La République n'est qu'une grande ville assiégée.*" It was truly with the frenzied energy of men besieged that the new government armed, planned, made ready their ragged, famished troops, crushed their enemies, prepared to defy all Europe while the fugitive members of the disbanded *Gironde* made their fine speeches and wrote their fiery pamphlets.

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Mlle. de Corday knew nothing of the external situation; the peril of France before the vast coalition that threatened her frontier had not touched the girl's imagination. She allowed no merits to the *Mountain*, no faults to the *Gironde*; she saw monsters, furies, murderers enthroned in Paris, heroes and martyrs haranguing from the balcony of the *hôtel de l'Intendance*.

From her window she watched eagerly the men whose names were already familiar to her from hundreds of newspapers and pamphlets; she saw them through the glory of their legend and her own dreams, but she was not disillusioned. They pleased her fastidious taste, she thought them worthy of their high task as *les sauveurs de la Patrie*, and the exaltation that always burned behind her serenity was heightened by their proximity. For the first time she, the obscure provincial who had never left her native country, beheld at close quarters some of the great men of her time. Every morning she was at her window watching the crowd that came and went excited, agitated, uncertain in the street below, or listening to the echoes of the voices of the deputies declaiming from their windows.

As the ferment in the town increased, so did the loneliness of Mlle. de Corday; there was no one in whom she could confide; she was a woman and so must watch great affairs from a distance, she was without money or influence.

She did not attend the political meetings held by the *Girondists*; in the *salons* of friends she met some of them: Jérôme Pétion, who had given Adam Lux good advice; Jean-Baptiste Louvet, ex-library clerk and author of the popular novel, *Faublas*; she had never read any romances and had no interest in Louvet's literary fame; none of these men was anything to her but a pillar of her beloved Republic.

She watched the unfolding of the plans for the Norman-Breton insurrection, the schemes of the *Fédération*, as the revolt of 1793 was called, the march on Paris; she read the proclamation of the Assembly

of Calvados couched in those fiery terms the *Gironde* knew so well how to employ :

“Citizens !

“In giving us the extraordinary and sacred powers that we exercise in your name for the safety of the Republic, you have sworn to combat all tyrannies, to march against the triumphant brigands who have outraged the People, usurped its power and ruined its fortunes.

“ . . . Soldiers of Liberty, the moment has come to make these brigands feel the full weight of their crimes ! Seize your arms ! March ! All Republicans will rise together ! Citizens, hasten ! the free men of Calvados must not be the last at this tryst. The proud Bretons will follow you ; their battalions are forming, in a few days they will fraternise with you. Already those of your brothers who march ahead call to you to join them under the banner of Calvados.”

On June 13th the United Assembly of the Departments was held in Caen (*L'Assemblée des départements réunis*). Twenty departments had formally declared against the government of June 2nd and sworn to be revenged on “the tyrants, brigands and monsters.” Lyons, in revolt even before the fall of the *Gironde*, had formed a *Commission de Salut public du Rhône et Loire* ; Marseilles, Bordeaux, Avignon, Dauphiné, Franche-Comté were ready to join Normandy in encircling and marching on Paris.

The excitement and dissension in Caen became almost insupportable ; even before the army was

raised there was a serious difficulty; the *Royalists* were enrolling in reply to the appeal of the *Gironde*; the Republican Wimpfen found royalists among his officers; at Toulon, Louis XVII was proclaimed, and the men of '89 refused to join forces with the struggling *Monarchists* of La Vendée.

Everywhere was a stream of forceful words, sincere and moving enough; if the language was theatrical, so were the events celebrated:

“La majorité vertueuse de vos représentants est forcée de délibérer sous la hache des assassins; une municipalité séditeuse, secondée par les ministres corrompus et prédateurs, qui s’est entourée d’un amas impie de brigands qu’elle soudoye avec les trésors de la République et qu’elle alimente du sang du peuple, ose enchaîner la volonté nationale. C’est sur les ruines sanglantes de la Patrie que des conspirateurs insensés veulent élever la volonté nationale.”

In this strain Bayeux strove to rouse the citizens to arms; brave words and not an ill-statement of the case, but all this *rodomontade*, as the *Jacobins* named it, was slow in bearing fruit. General Wimpfen had on paper sixty thousand men ready to march on Paris; in reality, Normans and Bretons together, there were but two regiments of cavalry and six battalions of infantry; some gathered under the *Royalist* Joseph-Geneviève, Comte Puisaye, at Evreux, others under Wimpfen himself at Caen; their main drawbacks were those of organisation, a united front, a concerted plan. Ardour was soon quenched, enthusi-

asm soon damped in face of delay, confusion, dispute—the men began to murmur in disgust at the weakness of their officers.

The summer was intensely hot. This extreme of heat added to the general enervation, the sense of fever, of excitement, of disarray; driven half-crazy by a bombardment of grandiloquence, the hard-headed Normans threw off their usual reserve and prudence, their love of peace and gain, and surged here and there in the streets of Caen listening to speeches, reading proclamations, pamphlets and newspapers, exchanging views. It was an atmosphere in which it was difficult to keep the head clear; but Charlotte de Corday remained calm; she had taken her resolution before the *brouhaha* began.

\* \* \* \* \*

On June 18th there appeared yet another placard in Caen. This was read with a peculiar admiration by Mlle. de Corday; it was an attack on Marat and held *ce monstre* up to public execration as the front and symbol of the government of the Terror. In cultured, fiery language, the tone of Corneille, of Rousseau, of Raynal, with which Charlotte de Corday was so familiar, the Normans were passionately incited to rise and march on Paris, to deliver the capital from the ruffians who kept it in a stranglehold, to destroy above all Marat—*que celui-là périsse, maudit du ciel avec toute sa race.*

This fierce manifesto, that did not lack either grace or nobility in the style (even Robespierre said of the writer: "He lies with a noble pride"), was signed: "Charles-Jean-Marie Barbaroux de Marseille, deputy



for the department of the Bouches-du-Rhône to the National Convention, expelled by force from the post to which the will of the people had elected him."

Mlle. de Corday had only, in the quiet retreat of her chamber, to take down her Corneille to find sentiments similar indeed to these and couched in a language even more sanguinary and lofty. In such terms had Cinna fulminated against Augustus:

*"Si l'on doit le nom d'homme à qui n'a rien d'humain,  
A ce tigre altéré de tout le sang romain."*

Marat, the tiger, the monster, the fury—under that one loathed name of *le plus vil des hommes* was gathered all the wrongs and cruelties that oppressed France.

Mlle. de Corday tore up the last of her papers on which was written: "Shall I?—Shall I not?"

In the heat of the summer evenings she sat by her open window catching the sweet, heavy breeze, the tumult of the day over while men ate and slept or argued behind closed doors, the stars making the purple heavens brilliant, in the house next door the solitary musician playing his clavecin. She knew what must be done; her agony had passed as had the anguish of Adam Lux when he had resolved to immolate himself before the Convention. Her noble and innocent soul, like his, at first almost overwhelmed by the horror of triumphant evil, had found a sure refuge in itself; to be all-sufficient is to disarm the world's power to hurt.

FIVE

ROSA MYSTICA IN HORTO INCLUSO

“Ce mélange de tendresse et de mélancolie qu’on nomme l’amour de son pays.”

*Chateaubriand.*

“—le désir de la vraie gloire, le renoncement à soi-même, le sacrifice de ses plus chers intérêts, et de toutes les vertus héroïques que nous trouvons dans les anciens—”

*Montesquieu.*

ON June 20th, 1793, Mlle. de Corday called at the *hôtel de l'Intendance* and asked for an interview with the citizen deputy Barbaroux; she mentioned, as an introduction, that she and the ex-deputy had common friends in the Forbin family; she was accompanied by the grave steward, Auguste Leclerc; her dress, her manner, her speech were those of a highly bred Norman gentlewoman; only her beauty was astonishing, and attracted, even in these moments of excitement and confusion, an attention of which she was unconscious.

Followed by her decorous servant she entered the *salon* of the *hôtel*, which was always full of visitors; Meillan and Guadet were there; they retired, leaving her to wait for Barbaroux. When he entered he greeted her courteously and there was a little pause of curiosity; she, eager to see face to face a man so famous, so admired and so unfortunate, he, piqued by the loveliness of the aristocratic stranger.

She might have easily introduced herself to any of the other deputies, but she had chosen Barbaroux because he focused her sympathy and her hatred. He had been one of the idealists of '89, he had led the first assault on the *Tuileries*, he had refused to resign to appease the mob, he had issued the fiery denunciation against Marat, he had had the address to break prison and to rush to rouse Normandy. He had always stood out boldly for his principles, and had not hesitated to denounce the massacres of September and to fulminate against Marat and Robespierre as murderers; he had been arrested on the denunciation of Antoine Saint-

Just, the cold correct youth with the face of a girl, who was a monster of a different genre from Marat, but a monster all the same—for all these reasons Barbaroux had a claim on the sympathy of Mlle. de Corday.

Nor did his personality disappoint her; to the allure of the cultured gentleman he added all the bravura, liveliness and gay charm of the South. Madame Roland, even when absorbed by her platonic love affair with the courteous and charming Buzot, found Barbaroux "an Antinoüs," and one who know him well thus described him: "Greek or Roman countenance, the glance of an eagle, personal advantages of every kind—an orator full of vigour and solidity, a gracious speaker enthusiastic for poetry and republicanism."

Barbaroux possessed, indeed, all the social graces and a personality that would have added brilliancy to any career; his talents were obvious, and if they were superficial, that was not apparent to those dazzled by his charm. He was twenty-six, two years older than Mlle. de Corday, but appeared more mature by reason not only of his majestic appearance, but also of his renown. With his long black hair cut *à la Brutus*, his brilliant dark eyes, the pure lines of his features, his perfect mouth, his stately carriage, his air of restrained fire, he was no ill representative of those heroes of antiquity adored by Mlle. de Corday.

She approved the seductive Provençal, not with her senses, which he had no power to touch, but with her mind; because she thought him worthy to grace a noble cause.

On his side Barbaroux was not glorified by a

romantic love as was Buzot, Vergniaud or Louvet; he was easy in his amours, *un homme à filles*, but his perfect breeding recognised that his young visitor had not called on him with any romantic intentions.

Their conversation was formal, courteous, always in the presence of the steward.

Mlle. de Corday spoke of her former school-fellow, Mlle. de Forbin, whose family came from Provence; she had been, before the closing of the convents, canoness of the Chapter of Troyes, and had been despoiled of certain property—her sole resource—which she hoped might be refunded to her—Mlle. de Corday produced all the papers relative to the case.

The handsome deputy examined them, then said, with that harmonious voice and that Southern accent he knew how to use with such effect, that they were not in order and that they must be sent to Paris.

"I shall do what I can to assist Citizeness, but I much fear that the recommendation of a proscribed man will not much serve your friend."

"Perhaps you have some friends in the Convention to whom you would introduce the matter, who would help Mlle. de Forbin?"

Barbaroux promised to write to one Lauze Deperret, a former colleague, also a deputy for *Les Bouches-du-Rhône*, who was already his intermediary with Madame Roland, then a prisoner at the *abbaye*.

After no more than this Mlle. de Corday took her leave. Barbaroux kept his word and wrote to his friend, mentioning the visit of a citizeness who required his assistance, and adding; "All goes well; in a few days friendly troops will be outside the walls of Paris."

After a week, having heard nothing, Mlle. de Corday returned to the *hôtel de l'Intendance*, and again without difficulty obtained an interview with Barbaroux; he was attentive, polite, a little curious; he promised to give her another letter for Deperret. Mlle. de Corday, who was still accompanied by the discreet servant and whose serene demeanour was unchanged, said that she was soon leaving Caen. Barbaroux begged her not to do so without taking leave of him; she promised this and said she would return in another week's time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charlotte de Corday followed closely and with painful interest the events which were taking place in Caen, and disclosed herself to none. She made preparations (she had few to make) for departure from the sombre dwelling that had been her home for two years. She returned some books she had borrowed, put aside four volumes of *L'Histoire des Chevaliers de Malte*, to be returned to Mme. de Pontécoulant, the former abbess of *L'abbaye-aux-dames*. She gave all her spare time to trying to finish a piece of fine needlework which was intended as a present for the servant, Anne Bosquaire, who had been kind to her during her stay with Madame de Bretteville; but the work was delicate, elaborate and refused to be hurried; she therefore took it to a needlewoman and paid in advance for it to be finished and delivered to the maid. She visited, with the detached, sad and clear sight of one who sees familiar places for the last time, the *Buttes de Saint-Gilles*, where she had tried to keep her father's poor home with dignity and decency, the elm walk outside

the *abbaye*, where she had walked as a grave child, the *abbaye* itself, where she had spent six years, where she had thought to live for ever as a nun. Massive, sombre, in the dark Caen stone, the building, that had housed holy women for seven centuries, was despoiled, empty and silent. The churches were still open, though in an irregular fashion, but Mlle. de Corday now seldom went into them to pray and it was some time since she had taken the Sacraments. She had passed beyond the need of ritual; she felt herself in direct communication with God; she had no need of any intermediary between herself and the Deity; fully aware of her mission, she had no need of symbolism. The purity of her soul required no comfort or sympathy from any human being; that of Heaven she had already received.

She typified the device of the Virgin to be found in Evreux Church and on several Norman fonts, one with which she was familiar—*Rosa Mystica in Horto Incluso*—the mystic rose, the rose of Sharon, in the enclosed garden. Her virginity was not only that of the exquisite and fastidious body, but also that of the delicate, noble soul. In her aunt's dreary *salon* she was affable and gracious; she might be going, she said, to visit her father at Argentan, or even travelling to England. She said to some acquaintances: "I have a voyage to make."

To Madame Paisan she gave a book of lace designs: "I shall have no more need of lace."

Visiting a friend, she found a young girl, Amélie Gautier, in tears because she had no ear-rings. "I shall have no more need of these," smiled Mlle. de Corday, and took the plain gold rings from her own



ears to give to the child. She had never had more than these simple ornaments—in all her life no extravagance or luxury.

On July 5th she went to see her friend, Madame de Villiers, at Verson. It was a brilliant day; Madame de Villiers was seated with her maids in the garden shell-ing peas.

On her arrival Mlle. de Corday ran up impetuously to her friend, clasped her in her arms, took the seat beside her; when the servants had gone, she said:

"I have come to bid you farewell—I have a journey to make—I did not wish to go without embracing you."

Her voice broke, she took up a handful of peas, crushed them in her delicate fingers, cast them down, and hastened away.

In the evenings she would burn on her wide-hooded hearth the pamphlets, speeches and journals of the *Gironde* that she had collected, read her Corneille, or, silent in the hot dusk, listen to the clavecin playing in the house next door.

Taking leave of another friend, Madame Lemoine, she appeared serene and gay, but Madame de Bretteville, a little curious about this talk of sudden departure, came unexpectedly into her room and found her weeping.

She quickly excused herself:

"Who would not weep, dear Aunt, in times such as these? Who knows who may not be struck down next? Who is safe while Marat lives?"

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On July 6th she packed her small trunk; in it she

placed her inexpensive but well-kept toilet articles, a petticoat in rose-coloured silk, another in white cotton, two chemises marked "C.D." (Charlotte Darmont), two pairs of cotton stockings, one white, one grey, a little sleeveless dressing-jacket, two caps and two fichus in linen, four white handkerchiefs marked "C.D.," a fichu of green gauze, a silk fichu with a red border, a packet of different-coloured ribbons, several pieces of chiffon, rose, white. This modest luggage ready, she had it sent down to the booking-office of the diligence service, Caen-Paris, where she had already taken a place in the coach leaving Caen at two o'clock on July 9th. The diligences left for the capital three times a week for Paris, via Lisieux and Evreux.

This duty accomplished, she went to her shoemaker, Lecointre, to buy a pair of shoes with stout soles and high broad heels, fit for the streets of Paris. Lecointre suggested that he should make her a pair, and she replied that she was pressed for time and chose some ready-made shoes. To her aunt, continually nervous and fearful, she continued to say that she was going to visit her father, to others she spoke vaguely of a voyage to England, via Paris.

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On July 7th Charlotte de Corday was present when General Wimpfen reviewed on the *Cours-la-Reine* the troops who were to chase the monsters and brigands from Paris. With banners bearing inscriptions: "War on the tyrants and the anarchists"—"Long live the Republic one and indivisible," the battalions paraded before a vast crowd. There were speeches appealing for volunteers; there were patriotic songs, new words to

old tunes—to the air of “The Old Man in Love” (*Vieillard qui d’amour est épris*) they sang “The Young Republicans’ Farewell to their Sweethearts.”

After all this excitement and the flaming eloquence of the Girondists, seventeen men volunteered instead of the hundreds expected.

Pétion stood near to Mlle. de Corday. He recalled her visit to Barbaroux and was piqued by what seemed to him the disdainful irony of her attitude, impassive though her fair face appeared.

“Would you be vexed if they did not march?”

She did not reply.

On returning to 148, *rue Saint-Jean*, she saw the wood-turner Lunel and his wife playing cards in his workshop and stopped to speak with them; some comments were passed on the review; Mlle. de Corday exclaimed suddenly: “No! it shall not be said that Marat reigned over France!” and ran upstairs to Madame de Bretteville’s apartment.

Later in the day she returned with Auguste Leclerc to wait on Barbaroux—to bid him *adieu* as he had asked, and to obtain from him the second letter in favour of Alexandrine de Forbin that he had promised.

Charles Barbaroux, though exhausted and galled by the events of the day, received her with his usual gallantry, but said that he would send the letter in the morning; Mlle. de Corday begged that he would give it to her at once—she was going to Paris “on business” and would deliver the letter herself.

Jérôme Pétion was present at this interview; he marked with a light amusement the young girl who took such a grave interest in politics.

She wore an undress of Indian muslin, suitable to

the great heat, with a little apron with pockets and a fine fichu over her shoulders; her hair was arranged in the fashion called "repentance" (*repentirs*) hanging in loose curls almost to the waist, and her mob-cap was the kind then in the mode—"baigneuse"; she carried a green paper fan. This simplicity could not disguise her native fineness nor the pride that was neither arrogance nor vanity.

Pétion was interested enough to watch this stranger closely and deeply, questioning Barbaroux on details of the government—when and where were the sittings of the Convention held, how could one obtain an entrance there, where did that and this deputy live? Would the Feast of Liberty be held as usual on the *Champ de Mars* on July 14th?

Pétion suspected that, under these excuses, Mlle. de Corday wished to attract the attention of the charming Provençal who was so successful with women. He began, with irony, to rally "the beautiful aristocrat who was so interested in Republicans."

"Citizen Pétion," replied Charlotte de Corday, "to-day you judge me in ignorance, one day you will know who I am."

She took her leave; she had other visits to make, and Barbaroux promised to send the letter immediately to her house; she left smiling, with what seemed a jest on her lips.

"Adieu, my dear deputy, to-morrow I go to Paris, where I shall see your tyrants face to face!"

She then visited Madame de Pontécoulant, of whom she took affectionate leave; her nephew, Gustave Doulcet, Comte de Pontécoulant, was then in Paris, as a deputy from Caen.

"Will you be away long?" asked the ex-abbess.

"That depends on the turn my business will take."

In the evening there was a friend to supper. Mlle. de Corday entertained him with exquisite urbanity; afterwards there was a drive with Madame de Bretteville and the Chevalier de Longueville to see his flowers in his garden at Saint-Julien—she was *d'une tranquillité parfaite*. She appeared saddened by the spectacle of the volunteers who were to march on Paris—those few hundreds, a useless sacrifice! The green-paper fan was constantly in her hand; she needed it, for even in the evening there was hardly a breath of air. The flowers were superb in the full splendour of the height of summer; Mlle. de Corday looked at them as if there, too, she left a farewell.

Serenely, almost gaily, she took leave of her friends and returned to the chamber that had sheltered her for two years and where she had only two more nights to stay.

She occupied herself with burning the last of the Gironde literature, preserving only the current number of the *Bulletin de Calvados*; then she took down her Bible and re-read the story of Judith.

The letter from Charles Barbaroux had arrived enclosed in a civil note to herself, asking her to write to him and give him news of her journey.

With this letter to Lauze Deperret were some pamphlets that Mlle. de Corday was to deliver. The *soi-disant* deputy, who was of a warm, affectionate nature, wrote thus:—

"My dear, good friend,—I am sending you some interesting works that must be made known. I wrote

to you, by way of Rouen, to interest you in the business of one of our citizenesses. It is only a case of obtaining from the Minister of the Interior some documents that you can send me here at Caen. The citizeness who will bring you this letter is so interested in this affair—which seems to me extremely just—that she is ready to take the greatest trouble about it. Farewell, and I embrace you and your daughters, Marion and the others. Give me news of your son.

“Caen, July 7th, 1793, Year II of the Republic One and Indivisible.”

This was not signed, but Barbaroux's motto (*épigraphe*) was added at the bottom.

Mlle. de Corday replied to this courtesy by a little note of gratitude in which she said that she would not fail to write to Barbaroux to report “the success of her enterprise.”

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The next day, July 8th, and the last in Caen, there was very little to do; she had been so careful, so cool in her preparations that there was leisure on her hands. To the young son of Lunel she gave her boxes of pencils and colours: “I shall not need them again.”

She drove out with a friend Madame de Fauville, for Madame de Bretteville was depressed, sick, and would not leave her chair between Minette and Azor; the ladies chatted cheerfully in the modest carriage. When they parted Charlotte de Corday gave her gauze scarf and her green-paper fan to her friend.

There was one more visit to make—to Madame

Malfilâtre: "I have a journey to make. I have come to say farewell."

She embraced her friend and her young son also, kissing him tenderly.

There was little more to do. She looked out her money; she had a hundred *écus* in *assignats* left from her father's allowance; fifty of these she put aside for the expenses of her journey.

She then, late at night, wrote a letter to M. de Corday, which she dated the day of her departure from Caen.

*"I owe you obedience, my dear papa, yet I am leaving without your permission, without seeing you, because I am too full of grief. I am going to England because I do not believe that one can at present live for very long happy and tranquil in France. In leaving, I put in the post this letter for you and when you receive it I shall no longer be in this country. Heaven refuses us the happiness of living together as it has denied us so many other blessings. Perhaps it will be more clement towards our country. Farewell, my dear papa, embrace my sister for me, and do not forget me.*

*"Corday.*

*"July 9th."*

This written, folded and sealed, there was little else to do. She was so absolutely alone; she had, by a supreme effort of will, detached herself from all her surroundings, from her affections, her hopes, her fears.

She was no longer even concerned in the tumults of Caen, which were increasing in violence; Buzot, furious at the small number of volunteers for the march on Paris, had suggested setting fire to the town and

putting the blame on the *Jacobins*. Wimpfen, learning of his intention, hastened to prevent him; the *hôtel de l'Intendance* was thus soon the scene of an excitement, a confusion, a debate in which the fair young woman with her modest petition for an ex-nun was forgotten; and Charlotte de Corday had forgotten them; she had achieved the peace that comes from harmony with God. The cries in the streets, the roll of the drums, the music, the singing, the violent strains of the *Marseillaise*, the streams of fiery eloquence, the armed men with the huge panaches of tricolour plumes, the excitement of Barbaroux, the irony of Pétion: these were no more than a blurred background, like the delirium of a fever remembered in health, to her resolve.

In her lonely leisure, while she listened to the soft melody of the clavecin flowing in through the open window, she had embroidered on a scrap of silk the sentence that had haunted her—"Shall I, shall I not?" (*Le ferai-je? Ne le ferai-je?*) This she placed in front of her dim mirror, so that she continually saw it as she moved about making her final preparations for departure; she had answered the question, but the sight of the words, so exquisitely traced by her needle, helped to soothe and sustain her resolution.

By the light of her candle, when the hot summer night at length fell and it was quiet in the street, she arranged her room as she had found it when she arrived, two years ago, to receive a cold welcome. The sombre apartment, furnished with heavy faded pieces, in nothing like the chamber of a young girl, had become sanctified to her by her own thoughts and dreams; it was the retreat that she had filled with all



the visions of her loneliness, where, light as a butterfly on a rose, her meditation had turned to the possible ideal lover who did not exist, "the pupil of Socrates, the soldier of Pericles," beautiful, serene, noble, strong, whom she might have loved. Here, too, she had learned to forgo these dreams, almost before they were formed; to everyone, to the elegant young noble Boisjungan de Maingré, whose murder had torn her heart, to Bougon-Langrais, the grave, handsome magistrate, to the fine young officer, M. de Tournélie, to the famous Barbaroux, she had said secretly—"Oh, my soul, this is not the man!" She was resigned to this loneliness, she even rejoiced in it, as it helped to make her burden lighter. "No one will mourn for my death," she had written. Her father had seen little of her for years, her brothers were far away and divided from her by war, her sister Eléonore had other friends, to Madame de Bretteville she had been a burden and a vexation. She was free.

All her farewells were taken, her little gifts made; there were some of whom she could not take leave: M. de Faudoas and his daughter, the brother of her dear Rose Fougeron du Fayot, Boussaton de Belleisle and others of her friends—these were in prison, probably awaiting death, merely for being patriots, decent citizens.

She put away her constant companions, her books, on the shelves at the side of her bureau, on the table by her bed, the Raynal, the Rousseau, the Corneille, the Bible; she had no longer any need of them, their messages were for ever graven in her heart.

Yet, after all, the sombre room had not had much of her; she was indifferent to her surroundings, which

had always been austere and poor; she took with her all she needed wherever she went:

*"Rome n'est plus dans Rome, elle est toute où je suis."*

She did not need to read any more of Judith, of Emilie, of Pauline; she had absorbed their souls; she did not need to ponder again the words of Corneille. Apposite to her own case as if they had been written for her inspiration, they rang in her mind:

*"Le ciel entre mes mains a mis le sort de Rome  
Et son salut dépend de la perte d'un homme."*

She knew the monster who was to blame for:—

*"Le ravage des champs, le pillage des villes,  
Et les proscriptions et les guerres civiles."*

She could affirm:

*"Lui mort, nous n'avons plus de vengeur ni de maître,  
Avec la liberté, Rome s'en va renaître."*

As she put away, carefully, with her money and the few necessities for her long journey, the packet given her by Barbaroux, she recalled the eloquent speeches of the brilliant young deputy, his emphasis on the country's peril from anarchy—"without another Jeanne d'Arc, without some deliverer sent from Heaven, without some unexpected miracle, what is to become of France?"

Everything was ready and the dawn had come; Charlotte de Corday slept a little for the last time on the sombre bed with the faded tapestry curtains and the worn coverlets.

\* \* \* \* \*

Madame de Bretteville was nervous, agitated, too ill to leave her chair, full of questions and apprehensions: "Where are you going; will you be safe?"

"Be reassured, I am going to see my father, my dear Aunt, and I shall be quite safe."

The last meal in the gloomy, large *salon*, with its methodical air of home and respectability, with the well-trained servants, with Azor and Minette.

When the leave-taking came Madame de Bretteville was tearful; this girl was of her class, her blood, she had been company, her departure added to the desolation and the uncertainty of the situation. Mlle. de Corday consoled her; she was safe in Caen, all would be well.

There were warm farewells to the women servants who had received her so dryly, but who had come to respect and love her; then Auguste Leclerc accompanied her to the starting place of the Paris coach.

As she passed the Lunels, she said: "Good-bye, you will not see me again."

The day was almost insupportably hot; the dark stone buildings of Caen shimmered in a haze of heat; the patriotic flags hung limp upon their poles.

Mlle. de Corday wore a robe of self pin-striped brown pique (*rayée*), with a white muslin fichu; she carried gloves and a fan; her hair was unpowdered and arranged in curls on her shoulders; her black hat was high-crowned with three black cords and tassels;

she wore the stout-soled shoes she had bought especially for the journey.

As she passed the post, she put the letter for her father in the box. Now everything was done; the coach was ready at the stage, she took a cheerful leave of Auguste Leclerc and stepped into the diligence; punctually, at two o'clock, it left for Paris, via Lisieux.

During these hot July days the diligence with Charlotte de Corday as a passenger left Caen and travelled towards Paris, Adam Lux was finishing his bold pamphlet, *Avis aux citoyens français*, in which he challenged Marat and the *Mountain* and supported those brave Normans and Bretons whom Charlotte de Corday had seen parading at Caen. He concluded his burning denunciation by a fearless defiance to *Messeigneurs les usurpateurs*—"After what I have written here, no doubt you will do me the honours of your prison or your guillotine, but I am ready to brave them."

As Mlle. de Corday came nearer to the capital, travelling by slow stages in the clumsy diligence through the exhausting heat, Jean-Paul Marat was forced to keep to his apartment, being too ill to drag himself to the *Comité du Salut Public*, where he enjoyed the triumph that he had been waiting for all his life. This forced inactivity bitterly galled the sick man; his rage helped to increase the poisons that were burning his blood, the great heat of the summer added to his torment; his doctor could give him no ease; his flesh was corrupting while he lived; death was only a question of weeks. But his powerful spirit refused to be daunted; with his head swathed in the vinegar-soaked muslin, an old dressing-gown over his

shoulders, Marat sat in his slipper bath, scribbling on a plank laid across his knees, pouring out, with that energy which had once tried to upset the unparalleled genius of Newton, idealism, venom, fantasy, fury, for the pages of *L'Ami du peuple*.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first relay stage of the diligence was at Vimont, three leagues from Caen, the second at Saint Aubin; at Lisieux, twenty-five leagues from Caen, it was necessary to stay the night. This town was still in the Calvados, in the beautiful valley of La Touques; was very ancient, the seat of a bishop since the sixth century, composed of handsome brick houses of Renaissance style, a noble cathedral and several fine churches; the coach from Caen drew up in the evening in the Faubourg Saint Désir at about five o'clock, and Mlle. de Corday engaged a room in the inn kept by a certain Delafosse, which had been formerly *Les Trois Rois* and was now *Le Dauphin*. It was a tranquil, charming place, seemingly far removed from terror and tumult, since Puisaye's soldiers had left it; opposite the inn was the impressive stone and brick mass of the Church of *Saint Désir*, constructed from the old Benedictine convent, with ornaments *en rocaille*. Mlle. de Corday was given a room on the first floor with a gallery overlooking a small inner court. After her modest meal, the traveller joined the host, his two daughters and another young girl, who were seated in the freshness of the evening on a bench in front of the inn.

The beauty, grace and noble air of the stranger greatly impressed these simple people; they were sur-

prised that one so obviously an aristocrat should be travelling without servants or escort in times so troublous, but her serene demeanour assured them that she was not bound on any difficult or dangerous errand.

She did not mention her business nor did they enquire it, but for a long time, while the hot evening deepened into the hot night, she talked with them, modestly and quietly, on matters of general interest.

Her harmonious voice, her charm, something very uncommon about her calm bearing, so impressed one of the young girls, who afterwards became a Madame Lemaître, that she remembered it all her life, and until she died, very many years afterwards, a centenarian, she would continually speak of the stranger who had spoken to her with such friendly kindness as they sat in the July warmth outside the inn.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

This was, to Charlotte de Corday, a gracious interlude, it recalled to her the tranquil days at Mesnil-Imbert, when she had been so happy with her companions and her pupils, the leisurely, well-ordered hours, the musings by the reeds of the home pond, the walks by the whitened hawthorn hedges, under the thick shades of the chestnut trees, the still Sundays, with a hush over the quiet fields and the church bells ringing.

She was glad to breathe, for the last time, in this peaceful company, her Norman air—the air of her native Calvados.

At six o'clock the next morning she took the coach for Evreux, twenty-five leagues from Lisieux; at

Evreux she did not stop, but took the night diligence for the capital, which was due in Paris at eleven o'clock the next morning.

\* \* \* \*

There were seven passengers in the coach from Evreux to Paris, two of them were young men of coarse and jovial appearance, whom Mlle. de Corday named at once and secretly "*Montagnards*." They tried to relieve the tedium of the journey by getting into conversation with the fair passenger; one of them declared that he knew her father and gave his name; he was an utter stranger and this was only a feint to gain her attention. Courteous, smiling, utterly indifferent, she put by these crude courtesies; piqued, the young men redoubled their gallantries; amused, she evaded them with ironic mockery.

So little did their stupidities concern her that as the night drew on and the interior of the coach became dark, save for the fluttering light of the exterior lanterns, she became weary of their banter and fell asleep in her corner; her high-crowned hat was on her knees, and her magnificent hair spread over the cushions of the coach; her noble features had, in their repose, an extraordinary tranquillity.

The young gallants ceased the plaintive love songs with which they had been trying to distract her and stared in silence at this beauty which seemed, they knew not how, so completely beyond their reach; the sparse rays of the lantern showed them intermittently the lovely slumber of the young woman, so fine, so out of place in this public vehicle.

One of the men regarded her with desire, with a

sudden and violent passion; what he had begun in jest he would continue in earnest; he sensed, without understanding why, that she was rare and remarkable—"a mystic rose in an enclosed garden."

He began to plead with her, to sing to her, half arrogant, half humble. When, in full daylight, she opened her eyes he pressed his gallantries on her—he asked the name and address of her father, that he might demand her hand in marriage; as they approached Paris he became more and more importunate, more and more in earnest. Fearing that he would compromise her design, she answered him pleasantly, affecting to take it all as a jest. The diligence, punctually at eleven o'clock, rattled into the *Cour des Messageries* in *la place de la Victoire Nationale* (*place Notre-Dame des Victoires*); the heat was even more stifling than it had been in Normandy; Mlle. de Corday was exhausted, shaken from the jolting of the coach, covered with dust, dishevelled from sleeping in her clothes, and completely a stranger in the capital, she was not only alone, she was abandoned. With difficulty she rid herself of her coarse admirer, who was dragged away on his business by his companions, and stood solitary, her trunk beside her, in the cobbled courtyard. She glanced at the coach from Evreux as it turned away; it was the breaking of her last link with Normandy.

In the courtyard was the booking-office of the coaches, conducted by a certain Noël; Mlle. de Corday went there and asked this man if he could recommend to her a cheap, decent *hôtel*?

He directed her to the *hôtel de la Providence*, which was quite near, No. 19, in the *rue des Vieux-*



*Augustins.* One, Gilles Vivien, who acted as porter to the travellers arriving by diligence, took her trunk on his shoulder and she followed him through the hot streets, holding in her tired hand the card given her by Noël, which read:

*Madame Grollier,  
tient l'hôtel de la Providence  
Rue des Vieux-Augustins, 19  
près de la place de la Victoire  
Nationale  
On y trouve des appartements meublés  
À tout prix.  
Paris.*

Madame Grollier, a free-and-easy woman of twenty-six years, had only had the *hôtel* for a few months; it was a stone building that had been erected about fifteen years before and furnished for the purpose of a hostelry of the cheaper sort.

The robust hostess, on the arrival of her new client, sent the trunk up by the waiter, François Feuillard, to room No. 7 on the first floor, and proceeded to take all particulars of herself from Mlle. de Corday—her name, her native town, etc.; all this information was necessary for the police, said Madame Grollier.

When, after having answered these questions, Mlle. de Corday found herself in the room assigned to her, she felt overwhelmed by fatigue and asked that the bed might be made up. Almost at once she changed her mind; she had something to do, she would rest afterwards. She made a hasty toilet, gave the waiter some money to buy pens, paper and ink, and asked

him the way to the *rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre*.

Shortly afterwards, at the very height of the heat of the suffocating July day she went out, weary as she was, to find the house of Lauze Deperret. The size and strangeness of Paris emphasised her isolation, her loneliness. She knew no one in the capital save a certain *Sieur Alain*, with whom she had corresponded on some business while she was at the convent; she had a good reason for not seeking him out.

It was one o'clock when she reached the house of Lauze Deperret; he was absent from home, at the Convention. She left the packet and letter given her by *Barbaroux* with the two young daughters who received her, and saying that she would call again later, returned to *La Providence*.

There she took some food and shut herself in her room to rest; the chamber was neither uncomfortable nor displeasing; the walls were hung with tapestries, there was a large pier-glass over the mantelpiece; window curtains and bed furniture were in crimson damask; there were chairs covered in satin, a marble-topped commode, a table with gilt candlesticks; the bed had a tester with curtains and several mattresses, the uppermost being of feathers; there was accommodation for ablutions, a ewer of fresh water, clean water. The window gave on to the corner of the *rue Montmartre*.

Late in the afternoon, having rested, *Mlle. de Corday* went downstairs and entered into conversation with *Madame Grollier* and *Feuillard*, the waiter, who were both in the *bureau*. Affecting the artlessness of a raw provincial, she tried to obtain news of what was passing in Paris, relating, in her turn, the recent

events at Caen. The conversation had the air of innocent gossip—the young Norman introduced the name of Marat—what was thought of him in Paris?

Feuillard answered that the patriots thought a great deal of him, but that the aristocrats detested him, and added that he was very ill and would not appear on the *Champ-de-Mars* on July 14th, nor for some time, if ever again, take his seat in the Convention.

Mlle. de Corday continued the casual conversation with an air of indifference, but soon broke it off to return to her room. She was profoundly disturbed by what she had heard.

She had come to Paris especially in time for the *Fête de la Liberté*, for she meant there to meet Marat, or, if this failed, to see him on the benches of the Assembly.

Now she was at a loss—what should she do? Baffled, troubled, she mused in the *hôtel* bedroom, her unpacked trunk on the floor by the newly-made bed, her body was enervated by fatigue and heat, but her mind remained resolute to her fixed idea—to kill Jean-Paul Marat.

SIX

THE KNIFE

“Vous vous perdez, vous vous perdez, vous dis-je. Votre tyrannie touche à sa fin. Après l’usage monstrueux que vous avez fait de votre autorité renouvelée ou non, elle finira. Croyez-vous que la nation, dont il faudra que la démence et l’ivresse finissent, ne vous demandera pas compte de vos vexations? . . . peut-être l’effusion de votre sang impur n’expiera pas vos forfaits!”

Guillaume-Thomas Raynal.  
*Les Deux Indes*, Tome II.

SINCE she had read of the revolution of June 2nd and the expulsion of the Girondists from the Convention, Charlotte de Corday had resolved to kill Marat.

Convinced that this duty and this sacrifice had been divinely laid upon her, she had achieved the task of detaching herself from all earthly considerations and at the same time of making careful preparations so as to involve no one but herself in the consequences of her deed and to leave her modest affairs in order.

It was not only to forward the cause of Mlle. de Forbin that she had three times sought out Barbaroux. It was also to attract the attention of the *Girondists* to herself, so that, when her deed was accomplished, they would be ready to protect her family and her friends. It was to save any trouble falling on her father that she had written to him that she was going to England. She had asked no help, no counsel from anyone; all who knew her would be able to say that she had not breathed a word of her design. Even the expenses of her journey she had paid herself out of her pocket-money.

She had done nothing that she regretted, made no false step, never hesitated a second in her resolution—and now she was, at the last stage of her enterprise, frustrated.

She had planned her deed so exactly, visualised it so clearly; she would strike down Marat on the *Champ-de-Mars* on July 14th, at the moment of his gross triumph, and, immediately afterwards, she would be slain by his furious supporters. She had no

doubts as to her fate. "One cannot attack a savage beast without being bitten," she had said in Caen. She had not even wished for fame, for glory; she had hoped to be destroyed and never to be made known.

If the 14th of July had, for some reason, not given her the opportunity she wanted, then she had planned to gain admission to the Tuileries and to strike the tyrant in his seat; there, too, as she visualised it, she would, in her turn, have been struck down and no one would ever find out her identity.

Now, what to do?

Useless now all the information she had carefully gathered from Barbaroux how to gain admission to the fête, to the Assembly, useless the introduction to Lauze Deperret, who was to have served to introduce her to the *Champ-de-Mars*, to the Tuileries.

\* \* \* \* \*

Still in an agony of indecision, she went again to the *rue Saint Thomas*. Deperret could, perhaps, help her in the affair of Mlle. de Forbin that she had sincerely at heart, he might even be able to help her in her great enterprise.

The deputy was entertaining some friends to dinner; when she arrived they sat at dessert. Mlle. de Corday was asked to return in the morning, but overcoming her natural reserve and modesty, she begged the servant to implore the deputy for a short interview.

The *Girondist* had broken the seals of the packet from Barbaroux; then, his guests arriving, had placed it, unread, on the chimney-piece.

However, on receiving the fair stranger's insistent

message, he left the company to receive her in the small cabinet where she anxiously awaited him.

Lauze Deperret (or Du Perret) was a brave and able man who had made a large fortune out of agriculture. Like Barbaroux, he was one of the deputies for Bouches-du-Rhône, but owing to his prudence and moderation he had escaped the fate that had befallen his more brilliant and more hot-headed colleagues. He lived, however, in a state of continual apprehension, and he had, not long before, been menaced in the Convention by a Jacobin, who had pointed a pistol at him. Deperret had, in return, drawn his sword and been threatened with arrest.

Mlle. de Corday's interview with this deputy did not last more than a few minutes. They remained standing while she solicited his interest for her friend and briefly gave him news of his colleagues, the refugees at Caen. She asked for an introduction to Garat, the Minister of the Interior, and Deperret promised to wait on her at her *hôtel* the following morning. Anxious that he should not forget the address, she gave him Madame Grollier's card that Noël had given her, and wrote on the back—Corday.

With that she took her leave and Deperret returned gaily to his friends.

"A curious business!" he cried lightly. "That young woman seems to me an adventuress—there was something very strange about her; well, perhaps I shall find out what it is to-morrow."

He had been, indeed, deeply impressed by the personality of his visitor; she was too beautiful for him to be able to take her austerity, her political zeal seriously, too feminine for him to attach much import-



ance to her business—surely all that was only a cloak for some romantic intrigue!

While the genial deputy discussed her lightly over his fruit and wine, Mlle. de Corday, almost too fatigued to walk, returned to her *hôtel*. She had solved her problem; she would go to Marat's private house and kill him there. But the details, how to find out where he lived, how to gain admission, she was too weary to work out.

When she gained her room she at once went to bed and fell into the sleep of profound exhaustion until the next day.

\* \* \* \* \*

At twelve o'clock, Lauze Deperret, still amused, curious, a little touched, came to the *hôtel de la Providence* and asked for Mlle. de Corday. He accompanied her to the Ministry of the Interior, but Garat was absent. On Deperret's insisting on an interview, one was arranged for eight o'clock that evening; the deputy returned home, the Norman to her *hôtel*; she was truly anxious to help her friend, and very troubled at these delays; it would soon be too late for her to help anyone.

Later in the day Lauze Deperret returned to *la Providence* to cancel the interview with Garat; affairs were becoming worse and worse for the *Gironde*; he feared immediate arrest—did not Mlle. de Corday see that his help was useless? Besides, in the state that Paris was in it was pure waste of time to try to push an affair like that of the ex-canoness; anxious, however, to please Barbaroux and still curious as to the mysterious stranger, he promised to return on the

Saturday morning with messages for the refugees, and he asked Mlle. de Corday how long she intended to stay in Paris. He supposed that she was soon returning to Caen.

"You will soon," she replied, "have news of me." Then she added earnestly—"I have some advice to give you. Leave the Convention, rejoin your colleagues at Caen."

"My place is at Paris, I cannot abandon it."

"You are committing a folly. Once more, leave Paris, I implore you. Listen to me, and fly before to-morrow evening."

Deperret was impressed by the warning, moved by her beauty, her sincerity; he no longer thought her an *intrigante*. Promising to return he left her; the name of Marat had not been mentioned between them.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the *hôtel* bedroom, using the cheap pen, ink and paper bought for her by the waiter, Charlotte de Corday wrote her testament, her *apologia*. Not far away in another *hôtel* bedroom Adam Lux was making ready for distribution copies of his pamphlet to be published the next day. Jean-Paul Marat was scribbling in his bath; the intense heat consumed all of them like the grip of a fever, but could not check their inexhaustible energy.

Mlle. de Corday entitled her document—*L'Adresse aux Français*; it was in the same style as Adam Lux's *Avis aux citoyens français*; it might have been by the same hand. She had not read the pamphlet of the young German; the similarity in thought and style was due to the likeness of their minds and circum-

stances. Adam Lux had resolved to commit suicide in order to shock the country into rejecting the Terrorists. Charlotte de Corday also intended to sacrifice herself for the same end, but before giving her own life she intended to take that of the tyrant.

This manifesto, for all its piercing and poignant sincerity, showed little individuality, so exactly was it couched in the language of the times, in the style of the books that Mlle. de Corday had read so often and with such passion and admiration. Not only was it so similar to the pamphlet by Adam Lux that was fast leaving the press, it might have been a speech by Barbaroux, or an excerpt from the indignant rhapsodies with which the *abbé* Raynal had interrupted his *Histoire des Deux Indes*.

The object of this writing was to justify the author's action and to clear herself from any criminal intent. She stated that she wished to accept the full result of her action, and that she would not, like Paris, the assassin of M. Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau, commit suicide after the deed; she wished to serve her country, to offer the utmost sacrifice—perhaps her head, carried above the mob, across the capital would serve—"as a rallying point for all the friends of the Law." She hoped to be the last victim of anarchy and hoped that the universe she had avenged would declare that she had deserved well of humanity by striking down "the savage beast fattened by blood."

In a paragraph that breathed the spirit and the rhythm of Corneille, she wrote:

"When Marat, vilest of scoundrels, whose mere name stands for numberless crimes, falls under the

avenging knife, the *Mountain* will tremble. Danton and Robespierre will pale, and all the other brigands seated on their bloody thrones will shiver before the thunder that the gods, avengers of humanity, only suspend in order to make their final downfall more awful."

When she had finished writing this testament, Mlle. de Corday pinned to her act of baptism—"pour montrer ce que peut la plus faible main conduite par un entier dévouement."

She then placed the two documents with her clothes ready for the morning, extinguished her candle which had nearly burnt away, and slept peacefully on the hired bed.

\* \* \* \*

By six o'clock next morning Mlle. de Corday was in the *Palais Egalité, ci-devant Palais-Royal*, the vast property of the millionaire *Citoyen Prince*, the one man in the Assembly who had the supreme cynicism to seat himself next the foul Marat.

She wore her dress of brown-striped piqué, a white fichu, her black hat with the cords and tassels, she carried gloves, a fan, a bag with handkerchief, watch, keys, and money.

The day was beginning in great heat; everything was dry and dusty. Mlle. de Corday seated herself on one of the benches in the garden, where the plants had long wilted and drooped from the incessant July blaze.

She had come to buy something and the shops were not yet opened, so she waited patiently.

There were few people abroad; the *Palais Egalité*,

from which the *ci-devant duc* d'Orléans drew a huge revenue, was let out in restaurants, shops, flats, gambling hells, houses of ill fame and frequented by the vilest purveyors of shameful pleasures and their cynical, desperate and idle clients.

At this hour the ugly traffic of the day had not begun; behind closed doors, shuttered windows, in cellars and in garrets, the vicious, the hunted, the wretched, the harlot, the pander, the gambler, dozed in exhaustion while the traders counted over the night's takings, the foul *salons* were swept clear of dirty cards and broken bottles, and the dining-rooms tidied for the coming day.

Mlle. de Corday knew nothing of this obscure and obscene world hidden behind the neat windows of the prim façade or under the shadows of the trim gallery. She did not guess at the proscribed nobles resting on the beds of the *filles publiques*, at the debauched rakes asleep in the gambling hells, at the vice, misery, lust, greed and bitterness housed in the *Palais Egalité*—to her it was merely a row of shops where she hoped to find what she had to purchase.

It was extremely hot, she was glad to sit still and rest, there was yet some freshness left in the morning air not yet soiled by the city. Several churches were open, but it did not occur to her to go to any of them to pray; her confession and her absolution were in her complete dedication of herself to a sublime purpose.

While she waited for the morning to creep on, Adam Lux, in the *hôtel des Patriotes Hollandais*, was listening to the reproaches of his countryman and colleague, Forster, on the indiscretions of his pamphlet.

"No doubt," Forster argued, "your intentions are noble, your courage is heroic, but it is for us, the deputation from Mayence, to remain neutral—by your rashness you will bring trouble not only on yourself, but on us who have not, so far, been molested by the government."

But the young German was as fixed in his principles as the young Norman waiting for the shops to open in the *Palais Egalité*. He told Forster that he was resolved to say what he thought, cost what it would, the idea of sacrifice was still uppermost in his exalted mind—the *enthousiasme* of his doctoral thesis still inspired his actions. But, just and generous as Mlle. de Corday had been when she left Caen without breathing a word of her intention to anyone, Adam Lux wrote a letter to Forster, in which he declared that the pamphlet had been published without the knowledge of the other deputies from Mayence.

While Mlle. de Corday and Adam Lux were thus employed on the warm morning of July 13th, a deputation from the Convention waited on Marat to condole with him on the ill health that kept him from his seat in the Assembly.

They found him eaten to the bone by his "leprosy," as they named the disease that had attacked him, and hunched in his bath, where he scribbled his inflammatory articles; the man was dying and in such frightful torments that death could be nothing but a release, but his friends consoled themselves that *l'ami du peuple* was merely suffering from a passing indisposition; he was, indeed, slightly more at ease on this morning of July 13th than he had been for some days, enjoying one of those intervals of comparative

freedom from distress that come even in the most agonising illnesses.

In these same morning hours the royalist Comte de Puisaye, second-in-command to Wimpfen, marched to his fate at Récourt, where his defeat ended the rising in Calvados and caused the flight of the *Girondists* from Caen.

One by one the shops in the open gallery of the *Palais Egalité* opened; shutters were taken down, doors unlocked, the slatternly figure of a street woman, the congested face of a drunkard, appeared for a second behind the tattered curtains of the flats above the shops, the unclean night-birds began to shuffle out of their haunts in search of food.

Mlle. de Corday did not know that such people existed, she did not even see them; the strength of her purpose created a supreme isolation round her; she rose, walked along the pavement, already hot, and found among the shops, already beginning to display their wares, what she wanted—at No. 177 in the arcade was what she sought; there a certain Bardin sold cutlery; already the lad had taken down the shutters and there was in the window a shining array of knives.

\* \* \* \* \*

The cutler was pleased to see this early customer; no doubt a young housewife making her own domestic purchases, as so many gentlewomen were now forced to do—but she only required a knife, a cheap kitchen knife. She selected one of ordinary size, a flexible blade six inches long, with an ebony handle to which were attached two rings to suspend to the cook's waist or a shelf.

She paid forty *sous* for this common knife and its case and left the shop to saunter again up and down the arcade, now gradually filling with shoppers and idlers.

It was too early for her, under any pretext, to try to see Marat, so she walked up and down, entirely detached from her strange surroundings, the knife in her long pocket with the small amount of money left to her, her gold watch, her passport and her handkerchief.

A newspaper boy came running past with the morning papers; Mlle. de Corday bought one for two *sous* and, returning to her bench in the dusty gardens, opened the flimsy sheets. The first item of news that caught her eye was the condemnation to death the evening before of nine of the twenty-six citizens of Orleans accused of an attempt to murder Bourdon de la Crosnière; they were to mount the guillotine, in the red shirts of murderers, this 13th of July.

\* \* \* \* \*

The case was peculiarly revolting and such as sufficed to make an Adam Lux, a Charlotte de Corday, wish to quit an earth where such atrocities were permitted.

This Bourdon, a drunken ruffian, was Marat's lieutenant in Orleans (*Commissaire National près de la Haute-Cour d'Orléans*), where he had made himself loathed by his debaucheries and cruelties.

As he passed blind drunk one night before the town hall, the sentinel challenged him; Bourdon replied by firing his pistol, the sentinel thrust at him with his bayonet and wounded him in the arm.

Bourdon raised the cry of a plot to assassinate him



and twenty innocent citizens who had never heard of the incident were dragged before the Revolutionary Tribunal of Orleans.

"This little bleeding (*saignée*) must be cured by a larger one," said Bourdon.

Nine men were to die because Marat's creature, by his own fault, had received a slight wound.

Mlle. de Corday left her paper on the bench and hastened on her way; she was impatient to accomplish what she had to do; she touched her bodice to reassure herself that her testament, folded in eight and pinned with her birth certificate inside her dress, was safe.

It was nine o'clock; she made her way to a *fiacre* stand that she had noticed on the *place des Victoires*, and, calling the first driver, asked him to take her to Marat's residence.

She did not know the address; neither, to her surprise, did the *cocher*; only after some consultation with his fellows did the man procure this—*No. 20, rue des Cordeliers*, near the *rue l'Ecole-de-Médecine*. Mlle. de Corday in the shabby vehicle, shaken over the rough roads, noted on a scrap of paper she had in her pocket this address and the way that led there; it might be necessary for her to return and Paris was confusing, so much larger than she had imagined.

She was calm, still detached from everything, still absorbed in what she had to do; only, now and then, the strange sights of the great city aroused her distant unmoved curiosity; her acute intelligence observed all those details that her emotions ignored.

In the same fashion she thought of her late home in Caen—Madame de Bretteville would be rousing, opening her shutters to the Norman sunshine, Azor and

Minette stirring, the decorous servants going about their monotonous duties, perhaps one of them would find the little silk embroidery—"Shall I do it?—Shall I not?" which she had forgotten to move from behind her mirror.

She saw this as a dream within a dream—like the little picture revealed by a peep through the wrong end of a perspective glass.

Marat inhabited No. 20 *rue des Cordeliers*, a dull humble house, known as *l'hôtel de Cahors*, where he had installed the printing press for which Simonne Evrard had paid, and where he lived with her in a squalid apartment, of which she paid the rent of 450 *francs*, and which had been taken in her name.

The *porte-cochère* was flanked by shops, passing under it Mlle. de Corday found herself in a sombre courtyard, with a well in one corner; to the right, under an arcade, was a staircase which led to the first floor, which, the *cocher* had told her, was occupied by Marat.

She was turning up this stairway when the *concierge*, Marie-Barbe Aubain, *mariée Pain*, who occupied the *rez-de-chaussée*, stopped her, asking her her business.

Mlle. de Corday turned away without replying and leaving the building walked up the street; she returned at about half-past eleven and quickly ran up the dismal stone stairway before the woman Aubain saw her; a circular iron ramp edged this stone stairway and at the top there was a landing giving on the courtyard by two windows.

In front of the stair-head was the door of Marat's flat; the bell-pull had been broken and replaced by

an iron curtain rod to which was attached a cheap handle.

Mlle. de Corday rang.

The door was opened by Catherine Evrard, the sister of Simonne; Marat's own devoted sister, Albertine, the maker of watches, had returned to Geneva with another brother; but these women waited on the sick man, the two sisters and a cook named Jeannette Maréchal. Despite these three attendants, Marat's place was carelessly kept; it was one of his affectations to be dirty and stinking, like the gutter ruffians whose cause he espoused; he enjoyed the distress felt even by the least squeamish of his colleagues at his proximity, only Philippe *Egalité* could sit next him on the benches of the Assembly, any other elements of hygiene that he might have learned in his medical career were forgotten; nor did the three women who administered to him trouble him by any insistence on cleanliness or any observance of sanitary precautions; the sombre and neglected apartment was like a foul shrine where squatted an obscene idol—Marat, decaying alive.

When the door was opened to Mlle. de Corday, she was offended by the rancid odour of coarse fish frying in cheap oil, and glimpsed a dismal little ante-chamber, with a rudely-tiled floor and a wall covered with a dirty white paper with a design of broken columns; this hall was lit only by the window which opened into the kitchen beyond.

Mlle. de Corday asked for an interview with Marat; she declared that she had some "very interesting and very important things to say to him."

Catherine Evrard replied rudely that Marat was

sick, that no one could see him, and that the visitor could take herself off.

Mlle. de Corday asked if she could return—even in three or four days' time?

Simonne Evrard now came up and supported her sister—no appointment could possibly be made for any day, however distant, for no one could say when Marat's health would be re-established. The door was shut in Mlle. de Corday's face.

\* \* \* \* \*

She returned on foot, through the midday heat, to the *hôtel de la Providence*, retracing her way along the streets she had so carefully noted; she did not take a *fiacre*, as she had to hoard what little money she had left.

Her serene calm was not shaken; but it was more difficult, more horrible than she had thought it could be; to slay the beast one had to descend into the slime.

Always, she had imagined the deed being done in the open air, under the sky, or in the grave chamber of the Assembly, some venue formal, important, where she might meet an instant death that would wipe out even her identity.

But this revolting background, the sordid lodging, the two low women, who appeared to her sluts, wretches, Marat's concubines, perhaps his attendant furies! Never had she, the fastidious gentlewoman, set foot in such a dwelling or spoken to such people, save when, in the blue robe of a *pensionnaire* at the *abbaye-aux-dames*, she had gone on some errand of charity to create herself order and cleanliness.

And Marat himself! What a foul beast it must be who lurked in such a lair.

What must she see or hear that was repulsive, disgusting, loathsome before her task was done?

But her strength did not falter; when so much had been overcome, shrinking nerves, a feminine squeamishness, must be vanquished.

The rebuff, the delay, first shook, then nerved her; it must be done, and done to-day.

There was yet another sacrifice to make, that of her fastidious integrity; she had never yet condescended to a subterfuge, not even to please her father and brother last year in the matter of the King's health. But Raynal had written—"One does not owe truth to one's tyrants."

As she ate her simple meal she revolved with her clear Norman intelligence her plan; when the *déjeuner* was over she went up to her room; the heat had exhausted her, the knife was heavy in her pocket, she took it out and laid it on the marble-topped commode.

There was still some of the cheap paper left that the waiter had bought for her; she took a sheet and wrote quickly, in her large, masculine hand:

*"I come from Caen. Your love of your country must make you wish to know the plots that are hatching here. I await your reply.*

*"Charlotte de Corday. Hôtel de la Providence."*

She went out and posted the letter, carefully addressed. How long would it take to be delivered? A few hours, she was told.

She returned to her *hôtel* bedroom to wait. The day



JEAN-PAUL MARAT

*A lithograph by Henri Gravelon, from the painting  
by Joseph Boze, made in 1793*



drew on, late afternoon, early evening; she sat down and wrote again:

*"I wrote to you this morning, Marat, did you receive my letter? Can I hope for a moment's interview? If you have received it I hope you will not refuse me, seeing how interesting the business is. My great unhappiness gives me a right to your protection."*

She had employed flattery for the first time in her life; surely this sacrifice would not be unavailing? The tyrant's vanity, curiosity, would doubtless be touched; the letter went into the *petite poste*; it would arrive, she was informed, at the *bureau* at the *rue des Cordeliers* about seven o'clock that evening. About seven, then, she would return to the sordid apartment. Surely, if she arrived at the same time as her letter, he would admit her to that "moment's interview" which would be sufficient for her purpose.

There were, first, other aspects of her pride to be sacrificed; she, who had never used even the most delicate coquetry towards any of the high-minded gentlemen of her acquaintance, who had not altered her toilette or her manner for a De Tournélie, a Bougran-Maingré, a Barbaroux, adorned herself to seduce the monster. She remembered the gross admiration of the coarse *Montagnard* in the diligence, she had heard that Marat, black Calvinist as he was, was fond of women, she remembered the two sisters who had eyed her with instinctive jealousy on the dirty threshold of the apartment, and it occurred to her that if he heard her voice at his door and looked out of his room, he would, if attracted by her appearance, grant her an



audience. Judith had curled her hair and poured a delicious perfume over her body in the service of the Lord.

Mlle. de Corday took out her most charming gown, a loose white Indian muslin with self-spots, transferred to the pocket her handkerchief, her money, her watch; inside the low bodice she pinned her testament and the last number of the *Bulletin de Calvados*. She exchanged the black cords on her hat for three bright green ribbons; she asked Madame Grollier to send in a hairdresser.

The assistant Person, a lad of eighteen, came round from the *perruquier* Férieux, whose establishment was near by, in the *rue des Vieux Augustins*.

He combed, dressed and arranged the brilliant locks in a more fashionable manner than they had ever known before, disposing the natural curls loosely round the beautiful face and gathering them in a knot behind to fall over the shoulders to the waist. On the front he sprayed powder, making the chestnut gold tresses *blond cendré*; he performed his task indifferently, as a matter of routine; as he worked he perceived, without interest, a knife in its case lying on the marble-topped commode.

When Mlle. de Corday had paid the hairdresser and he had gone, she took off her dressing-jacket and carefully folded over her shoulders a fichu of a delicate rose-coloured gauze, which passed round her waist and tied behind.

She then placed the knife in her pocket and left the *hôtel*, walking to the *fiacre* stand, where she took a vehicle and ordered the man to drive to No. 20, *rue des Cordeliers*; it was seven o'clock when she arrived;

she told the *cocher* to wait, and passed between the two shops across the courtyard; the porter's box was empty, so that it was without being challenged that she reached the door of Marat's dwelling; her delicately gloved hand rang the broken bell. Jeannette Maréchal opened the door, holding a medicine spoon; behind her the *concierge* Pain was folding copies of *L'Ami du peuple* ready for the morning sale.

Before Mlle. de Corday could state her business two other people arrived at Marat's door: Pillet, a young man bringing an invoice, and close behind him, Laurent Bas, a street porter employed in the distribution of Marat's paper; he had come to take some copies of the current issue to the War Office, and had brought with him a parcel of paper from the *Maison Boichard*.

This last issue of *L'Ami du peuple*, No. 242, dated July 14th, was of some importance; it denounced the inaction of the Committee of Public Safety and accused Charles Barbaroux of being a royalist and "an enemy of the country"; in brief, this popular journal, which appeared under the ill-chosen motto, "*Ut redeat miseris abeat fortuna superbis*," demanded more blood.

The young man Pillet went in to Marat and Mlle. de Corday advanced into the passage; the woman Pain, with a lewd grin at the seductive elegance of the stranger, stood in her way behind the freshly-folded pile of newspapers; having delivered his invoice Pillet came out of Marat's room and left the flat; Mlle. de Corday continued to argue with the *concierge*, who was one-eyed; a coincidence as her own mother and uncle had had the same defect.

Tenaciously and with superb tranquillity the Norman stood her ground: had her letters been received, could she have an interview?

The woman Pain could not, she declared, tell, with the huge correspondence that came to Marat, what letter had or had not been received, but the visitor could not see the citizen deputy, who was ill and in his bath.

Into this altercation came Simonne Evrard; Mlle. de Corday turned to her, imploring an interview:

"I have some important revelations to make."

"Now, it is impossible, perhaps in two or three days——"

Marat, having heard the argument, called out from his room. Simonne went into him and Mlle. de Corday remained, resting against the wall covered by the paper with the broken columns, staring down at the one-eyed woman folding the papers that were to carry the denunciation of Charles Barbaroux all over Paris.

Simonne came out, sullenly obedient to her master; Marat would see the citizeness from Caen.

Jean-Paul Marat was seated in his bath in the tiny room adjoining, by means of another little closet, his bedchamber, which gave on to the passage and was lit by two windows which opened on to the street; beyond these chambers was a *salon*; these rooms, with the kitchen, composed the poor apartment, which was miserably furnished and poorly kept, the ignorant mismanagement of stupid women adding to the unavoidable squalor of poverty.

The few pieces of furniture that the place boasted had been bought with Simonne Evrard's small capital,

added to by what petty pilferings Marat had been able to make in the accounts of the *Comité de Surveillance*; he was extremely poor and harassed by debts; *L'Ami du peuple* did not make much profit from the *sous* of the *sans-culottes* and Marat had no other means; despite Barbaroux's flamboyant gibes about *les misérables engorgés d'or dans leurs superbes voitures*, the *Montagnards* had not gained worldly wealth by their political triumph, not that they were averse from pillage, but by the time they gained power there was nothing left to pillage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mlle. de Corday entered the bathroom and the two disciples of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, having come by such different ways to this meeting, were face to face: the woman of twenty-four, the man of more than twice her age, separated by nationality, he the Southerner, she the Norman; by religion, he the Calvinist, she the Roman Catholic; he of the people, of obscure and mean descent, she of noble blood, untainted and proud for generations; she so fair and pure, healthy and delicate as a rose, he dying, foul, corrupt and hideous.

The scene that Mlle. de Corday beheld had all the horror of an hallucination; never had she imagined such a spectacle as this; Marat was seated in his bath, which was *sabot* shaped, which had been painted fawn colour and was nearly black from dirt; he was nude to the waist, an old dressing-gown thrown across his shoulders. Across the bath was a plank of wood that served as a desk, on this were paper, a pen, a common bottle of ink tilted by a billet of wood. Marat's huge

head, so disproportionate to his meagre body, was bound by a napkin dripping vinegar that hung in the clotted masses of his heavy, greasy black hair.

The face itself was terrible beyond even what Mlle. de Corday had supposed; the features were swollen and crushed, the frightful humid lips and the sunken cheeks were the same livid hue, the ghastly tint that the olive complexion of a Mediterranean native takes on in mortal sickness; this lead-coloured tint was disfigured by scabs and sores, the sparse hairs of ragged eyebrows, the coarse stubble of a half-shaven beard, the naked body was scaled as if by leprosy, and beneath the shrunken flesh showed the pitiful undeveloped frame bent by rickets.

From this almost inhuman mask looked out two piercing yellow-grey eyes, infected with bile and blood, but serene and formidable.

Behind the bath was a map of France nailed to the wall underneath a shelf on which were a pair of pistols, a placard showing the one word *Mort*; on the dirty floor was a copy of *L'Ami du peuple*; on the sill of the small window stood two plates of brains and sweet-breads, ready for supper.

The closet was so small that there was only room for two people; near the door into the passage was a kitchen stool; the other door leading into the cabinet of the bedroom was open.

Without replying to Marat's greeting Mlle. de Corday sank down on the stool. He surveyed her curiously, wistfully; with her brilliant beauty, heightened by a superhuman emotion, her loose white summer dress, her rose-coloured gauze over her

lovely bust and shoulders, her green ribbons, the powdered curls and elegant air, the girl resembled the aristocratic ladies with whom he had once mingled when he was in the employ of M. d'Artois, and whom he had coveted, and loathed because he coveted. Since he had become the demi-god of the mob the grim Calvinist had had his gallantries, which had been, however, circumscribed by his person and his purse, no such dainty gentlewoman as this had ever entered the lodging presided over by Simonne Evrard, no such fragrant creature had ever come to one of Marat's rendezvous; and he was not without his appreciation of beauty, he had written love verses in his time which were at least as good as those composed by the seductive Barbaroux.

He spoke to her gently, in that sonorous male voice that came oddly from a feeble body—what was her errand and what could he do for her?

Charlotte de Corday knew that the supreme moment had come; her energy sank down a second before flaring up to the final climax; she turned her blue eyes to the map of France to give herself courage—had not even Judith paused to utter a prayer? "Lord God, strengthen me."

Below the map was the word *Death* on the placard; she had only to think of the massacres committed—nine innocent men that morning—of the massacres planned, to stifle any rising surge of pity for the monster who at near sight was a feeble, sick, defenceless man; but the effort to maintain her calm brought a nervous sob to convulse her throat. The closet was so disgusting, the air so foul. Marat comforted her, asking her to tell him her trouble, her danger; he was

flattered that this lovely aristocrat should have run to him for protection.

The sound of her lover's voice using gentle tones to another woman brought Simonne Evrard into the room; the excuse for her intrusion was a carafe of water flavoured with almond and in which floated small cubes of ice; a favourite remedy of Marat's against his feverish thirst; Simonne poured out a glass of the mixture and Marat drank; she asked if it was to his taste? He replied that she might, next time, increase the flavour.

With that the woman retired sullenly, taking with her the two plates of brains to re-heat; she closed the door behind her; Mlle. de Corday now remained alone with Marat, who continued to press her gently as to her business. She came from Caen? Well, what was happening at Caen?

She had recovered from her moment of agony and answered calmly, giving him the details he desired on the movements of the *Girondists*, the rising of the citizens, the number of armed men, the names of their leaders.

Marat pushed aside the proof he was correcting, seized a piece of paper, and noted down question and answer.

He demanded the names of the deputies in Caen, the movements of the refugees were not well known in Paris.

She gave them to him, Pétion, Louvet, Guadet, Buzot, Barbaroux. . . .

Marat's eyes shone with pleasure; this news came opportunely for his yet unpublished article attacking the handsome Provençal; he felt the approach of a

gratified hate—an especial hate for men like Buzot and Barbaroux, these seductive heroes of romance, these elegant gentlemen, young, healthy, charming, who were all that he would have liked to have been.

Mlle. de Corday had risen and approached him; she had her hand in her pocket as if she sought for her handkerchief; her lovely presence was soothing to him in his torment.

“—Buzot, Barbaroux, well, I shall send them all to the guillotine in a few days.”

Charlotte de Corday took her hand from her pocket; Marat, stooping over his writing, had allowed the old robe to fall off his shoulders; his bare torso was exposed; the girl leaned forward; she had drawn the knife from the pocket, from the sheath; with one passionate movement she drove it home, straight downwards through the naked breast, up to the hilt, then drew it out and cast it down on the plank where lay the list of proscribed *Girondists*.

With a raucous cry Marat fell backwards; the door was instantly thrown open by the three women folding the papers in the passage outside, Simonne Evrard, Jeannette Maréchal, the one-eyed woman Pain; they saw Marat stiffened in agony, his eyes staring, his tongue protruding and blood gushing from the gash above his heart.

With yells of horror the cook, Maréchal, and Simonne Evrard began to drag the dying man from the bath, while Pain, the *concierge*, rushed downstairs, shrieking, to rouse the neighbourhood.

Charlotte de Corday passed through the closet and the antechamber, came out into the passage and advanced to the outer door; she had told the *fiacre* to



wait, she had thought there might be a chance, a wild chance, that she would be able to escape in the confusion, escape at least from the first blind fury of the monster's underlings.

Laurent Bas, the street porter, barred her way; she backed before him and he drove her into the *salon* and knocked her down with a chair, holding this over her to keep her prostrate; she struggled to rise, again he knocked her down and struck her; another lodger in the building, one Cuisinier, a lemonade-seller, came running in at Bas's cries of "Help! Help!"

These two men tied the girl's hands behind her back with their handkerchiefs and mounted guard over her; resigned and impassive, she leant against the mantelpiece.

\* \* \* \* \*

A crowd of howling, struggling people had soon filled the small room, hot from the sun of the burning July day; Marat had been carried by the three women to his bed; he was dead, even as they lifted him; gouts of blood marked his passage; in a vain fury of grief and tenderness Simonne Evrard placed her hand over the gaping wound; there was something heart-breaking in her woe, which had the unreasoning agony of a dog who has lost his master.

Police, doctors came pushing through the crowd; the *cocher* who had driven Mlle. de Corday was still waiting at the *porte-cochère* and eagerly directed the surge of curious yelling neighbours and passers-by to Marat's apartment; from the *rues La Harpe, Haute-feuille, l'Observance, des Vieilles-Boucheries* the mob pressed. The apartment was soon full, the *sans-culottes*

filled the stairway, the courtyard, the street; men and women had one desire—Marat, their friend, their idol had been killed by an aristocrat, a virago, a fury; eh, well, kill her, and instantly!

Through this foul hurly-burly a surgeon-dentist, one Lafondée, forced his way; his window overlooked Marat's rooms and he had seen Laurent Bas standing over a woman, shouting abuse—*Scélérat! Coquine!*

With an air of authority this educated man Lafondée made his way to the bedchamber, which he cleared of all save the shrieking Simonne; he asked the other women for hot water, linen for a compress; too late, there was no flutter at heart or wrist; with open jaws from which the tongue hung out, with staring eyes, Marat lay dead.

Lafondée sent someone to the near-by School of Surgery to fetch a doctor; in a few moments arrived Jacques-Philippe Guellard, commissioner of police of the *section du Théâtre Français*, who had chanced to hear the clamour in the streets; he was quickly followed by Dr. Pelletan, Surgeon-in-Chief of the *Hôtel-Dieu*, and professor at the School of Medicine.

These two men, by virtue of their professions, Law, Medicine, and their own coolness and weight, were allowed through the cursing, jostling, filthy mob that choked the apartment and all entries to it, rendering the heated unventilated rooms almost insupportable.

Guellard and Pelletan found instant traces of the violent end of the man who had dealt in violence. The bath was filled with blood-stained water, there was a trail of blood through the cabinet across the bedchamber to the bed where Marat lay in a spreading

stain that soaked into coarse coverlets and sheets.

Pelletan could only confirm the death of Marat amid *une mare de sang*. With professional coolness he proceeded to draw up his deposition; it had been a clean, a skilful blow; death had been as instantaneous as that given by the blade of the guillotine; "the knife penetrated by the clavicle on the right side, between the first and second ribs, traversed the lung, and opened the heart, which accounts for the blood which left the wound in torrents. . . ."

*"Te baigner dans le sang fut tes seuls délices,  
Baigne-toi dans le tien et reconnois les dieux!"*

*Chénier.*

While the doctor was occupied with the man of blood soaking in his own blood, the Commissioner of Police, Guellard, who had been joined by some soldiers of the National Guard, entered the *salon* to arrest the assassin; he had to use all his authority to keep in bounds the rage of the crowd inflamed by the agonised shrieks of Simonne and the yells of Jeannette Maréchal, who brandished the blood-stained knife; several other police arrived from the *Mairie* and helped to keep some order.

It was nearly eight o'clock; the postman arrived with Mlle. de Corday's second letter:

*"Marat, have you received my letter? Can I hope for a moment's interview?"*

The postman pushed through the press; the letter passing from hand to hand, reached the Commissioner

of Police; he opened it, read it; on the back was the address:

"To the *Citoyen Marat, Faubourg Saint-Germain, rue des Cordeliers, à Paris.*"

Methodically Guellard wrote underneath:

"This letter has not been delivered at the above address; it was rendered useless by the admission of the assassin the last time she came at half-past seven in the evening, at which hour she committed her crime.

"Guellard."

The Commissioner, having quelled in some degree the crowd, entered the bedroom where Marat lay. The knife, taken from Maréchal, lay beside him, Pelletan was in charge, from him Guellard soon learnt the rough outline of the murder; Pelletan showed him his certificate attesting the cause of death; Guellard sent one of his men to the Committee of Public Safety, another to the *Conseil de la Commune* (Town Council of Paris) with this grave news. He then proceeded into the *salon* to examine the assassin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Guellard found a fair, serious young gentlewoman, stately and reserved, who seemed most grotesquely out of place in these sordid surroundings, in this terrible scene; her composure was perfect, without affectation or strain. Her hands were tied behind her by a cord that had replaced Bas's handkerchief, her delicate white robe, her rose gauze fichu were torn, on the floor beside her was her high-crowned hat with the green ribbons, her brilliant hair, from which much of the powder had been shaken, hung to her waist, her

beauty, under these circumstances and in these surroundings, was startling.

She regarded, not with disdain, but with pity, the foul-mouthed women who outraged her with indecencies and who were only kept from maltreating her by the pikes of the two policemen who guarded her; she glanced with compassion at the filthy *sans-culottes* howling for their overthrown idol.

She was in no state of hysteric exaltation or mystic trance, she noted all that was going on about her with keen intelligence, even with humour; only the piercing cries of Simonne saddened her; she winced when these screams of agony reached her ears; she had not reckoned on that, that anyone might love Marat.

It was past eight o'clock and the candles were lit as Guellard proceeded to question the prisoner; she answered coldly; there was so little to say; what she had done, her own identity was easily explained; she was very brief, she said nothing of her emotions, her fatigues, her readiness for self-sacrifice; she had come to Paris, where she knew no one, to kill Marat.

She was searched; in her pocket a gold watch with the maker's name "*Duborq de Caen*," a silver thimble, a reel of white cotton, her passport, a little money, the sheath of the knife, inside her rose fichu the testament pinned to her certificate of baptism.

Guellard quieted the crowd and got them out of the room by telling them that if the prisoner was punished on the spot, the plot in which she was concerned would never be revealed. It was the only means of saving her life; aided by his colleagues he preserved not only this, which she valued so little, but her dignity and modesty, which she valued so much. She thanked him graciously

—the police were, she said, “brave men above all praise.”

Guellard could gain nothing more from her; she was not concealing anything; but she had so little to say; she had done what she had to do; she wanted the inevitable end.

“Did you try to escape by the window?” asked Guellard.

“I never thought of it,” she replied, “but I would have left by the door if I had not been prevented.”

It was dark and there was little more to be done; the doctors were busy with Marat; he must be embalmed, and quickly; the pungent acrid odours of aromatics began to overpower the foul smells. Gradually the police pushed the people out into the street, where the crowd was suffocating round the carriage that Mlle. de Corday had told to wait. Guellard sent out for refreshments for his men, and noted the cost, *neuf livres*.

Police had been sent to the *hôtel de la Providence*, to the booking-office of the Norman diligence; her few clothes, her parcels of silks and chignons, were turned over—nothing. On the floor some scraps of paper; pieced together they formed a name and address, that of Lauze Deperret, friend and defender of Madame Roland, muse and inspiration of the Gironde, since June 2nd a prisoner at the *abbaye*; the waiter at *la Providence* said that a man of about forty, about five foot four, wearing yellow trousers and a piqué coat, had called twice on July 12th to see the visitor from Caen; the travellers in the coach from Evreux on July 11th, rounded up by the police, remembered well enough the fair woman journeying so

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

strangely alone, with whom the rough gallant had exchanged half-serious *badinage*; she had spoken, these witnesses declared, the names of Barbaroux, of Deperret. It was enough; the *Gironde* had been accused of the murder of Lepelletier, of the treason of Dumouriez, they were now accused of the murder of Marat—Charlotte de Corday was the tool of the refugees in Caen. Lauze Deperret was arrested.

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Four deputies were delegated to examine the prisoner; they arrived, hurrying through the hot night, the foul-mouthed crowds, at the lodging of Marat, where there was still blood on the floor, in the dirty bath, where the doctors were shut in the bedroom doing their best to preserve the hideous corpse; it was not easy, the infected flesh corrupted under their hands, the poisoned blood rotted, the jaw would not close, the lids would not fall over the staring eyes; everything had to be made ready in haste for the embalming; J. F. Louis Deschamps, head of the *Hôpital de l'Unité*, and his assistants had a hard task; fearful of their health they burnt large quantities of aromatics in every available vessel the women could bring, messengers kept running out to buy the costly unguents and spices; never had Marat had so much money spent on his neglected body.

In the *salon* the prisoner still sat, her hands bound behind her back, her dress torn, her glance serene in the light of the candles placed lavishly about the room; she had been there several hours, without food or water, without change of position, protected by men with pikes, insulted, menaced, stared at, sternly ques-

tioned, in constant expectation of a savage death; the air was foul, the heat intense; it was a martyrdom, but she did not wince; she had had time and opportunity to destroy herself, but she did not take it; she despised suicide.

Beside her, on the table, were the modest contents of her pocket, the passport, the thimble and reel of cotton, the gold watch, the few pieces of money; in front of her were the deputies, her judges, her inquisitors; they had nothing to fear from this unarmed girl, so strictly guarded, but they kept her bound.

The spokesman was François Chabot, always the enemy of the *Gironde*; this unfrocked Capuchin, one of Marat's toadies, without ability or presence, coarse, vulgar, a low *débauché*, nick-named because of his red face and strutting air, the Turkey, once declared before the Assembly "that the citizen Jesus Christ was the first of the *sans-culottes*; his colleagues were men of the same stamp, common, rough; the prisoner's clear glance swept them all, then turned aside indifferently; she had been triumphantly justified in her opinion of these men; Marat *was* the leprous horror, these were the low scoundrels the *Girondists* described—faced by these ignoble enemies, she was completely mistress of herself and, in a way, mistress of them by reason of her nobility and her calm.

Chabot at once threatened her with the guillotine, she replied by a smile of contempt; astonished, he set himself to question her; she replied briefly, with aristocratic detachment: "There is so little to tell and she has told it all before;" Chabot found her arrogant, audacious, her courage fascinated him; he



coveted her brilliant beauty, as so many others coveted it, he prolonged his futile questioning in order to gloat over her neck, her bosom, her arms, her exquisite face, her scattered hair; he noted in his report—*“avec toutes des grâces, une taille et un port superbes, elle paraît d’un courage à tout entreprendre.”*

By this courage, helpless and humiliated as she was, assailed by fatigue, she braved and over-awed the lustful ex-monk; when he took up her gold watch, greedy of its value, she said, with a smile:

“Have you forgotten that the Capuchins are vowed to poverty?”

While his colleagues grinned, he asked grimly:

“How did you learn to strike so well—direct to the heart of Marat?”

“The indignation in my heart,” she replied, “showed me the way to his.”

Chabot was silenced; Legendre took the word, trying to make himself important; he wished to show that he also had been in peril from the fury of the Gironde.

“Was it not you who called on me this morning, saying you were a nun?”

Charlotte de Corday’s glance fell on him in keen contempt.

“You deceive yourself, citizen,” she replied. “A man like you is not big enough to be the tyrant of his country, and you are not worth the trouble of punishing. Besides, I never had the intention to strike anyone save Marat.”

The laugh was turned against Legendre; a young journalist brought his bilious face, his dishevelled person, into the room—Marat’s pamphleteer, Camille

Desmoulins; he noted how this woman made her judges ridiculous. Hamard de la Meuse, who contrived to slip into the crowded room, observed her demeanour with astonishment and admiration, and noted down every detail of what was happening.

Her testament was read; they had no comment to make, beyond that it was "a diatribe."

What more to do? The prisoner will compromise no one; she insists, with great firmness and pride, that no one knew of her purpose, that she has no accomplices; she does not mention Barbaroux or Deperret, only by those little scraps of paper in her *hôtel* room do they trace her visit to the latter; it is her one error.

It is nearly two o'clock in the morning; the room is crowded again; Hébert is there, the infamous editor of *Père Duchêne* that the *Gironde* tried in vain to suppress, this sewer rag that is unquotable and should have been unprintable, the paper that has covered with obscene abuse all the members of the *Gironde*, Roland and his wife; Hébert, "the vulture with the face of a choir-boy"—ex-lackey, ex-theatre porter—presses forward to stare at this other victim—two women, the Queen and Madame Roland, has he bespattered with that foul language of the gutter, here is a third, delivered to his hands; he makes notes for his next issue; *Père Duchêne* will appear to-morrow with these words: "She has the gentleness of a cat, which offers a velvet paw in order to scratch better; she appears no more troubled than if she had performed the best possible action—she went to prison as tranquilly as if she were going to a ball."

Hébert, creeping close like a jackal, sees her few

coins on the table; they suggest to him a libel to inflame the greed and envy of his miserable readers; he and Marat were so clever at that, exciting the fury of those who have not against those who have—ah, Marat will write no more articles and Hébert is sole master now of the gutter press. “—her pockets were filled with money and several forged *assignats*.”

Nothing more to do, nothing more to be gained, but Chabot is loth to let this astonishing creature, with her voluptuous yet virginal air, escape; he sees his chance; a piece of paper shows above the torn fichu, he leans forward to thrust his hand into the white bosom; to protect herself from this outrage Charlotte de Corday makes a violent movement backwards that breaks the fine laces of her bodice; she is exposed, half naked, before her enemies, and instantly bends forward so that her long curls hang over her bosom, a blush suffusing her face that has been of such a tranquil pallor. In a low humble voice she, who has been so proud, asks a favour—Will they untie her hands that she may adjust her dress?

She achieves the impossible; she awakens, by her innocence, her dignity, some chivalry in these men; Drouet, the most decent of the deputies, orders her hands to be untied; even Chabot is shamefaced; they occupy themselves with the paper she gives them while she knots the broken lace, puts together, as best she can, her torn robe, her ragged fichu; this is the first time she has been dishevelled in her attire.

What is this paper? A number of the *Bulletin de Calvados* relating the expulsion of the *Girondists* of May 31st and June 2nd.

As her hands are untied she may sign her deposi-

tion; it is read over; she corrects it at several points; her replies have been wrongly reported; she is more accurate, cooler than any of them; they make the corrections she demands; will she hear it read over again? She thinks this useless; very well, let them depart.

They approach her to tie her hands again; she shows them her wrists, cruelly marked by the rough cords pulled so viciously tight; she makes another appeal; she has forgotten that this is the Year II of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, she says "*Messieurs*," she uses very courteous the tone of a gentlewoman to inferiors: "If it is indifferent to you, *Messieurs*, whether I suffer or not before I die, I pray you to permit that I pull down my sleeves, or put on my gloves under the cords."

They are abashed; she pulls down her muslin ruffles, she puts on her loose gloves, they tie the cords, this time more lightly; Hamard de la Meuse, who notes every word she says, "suffocates."

They take her into the bedroom where, through the fumes of the burning pastilles, she can see the corpse of Marat stripped, bandaged.

"*Eh bien*, yes, it is I who killed him," she says, and turns aside from the horror on the bed; they watch her in vain for pity, regret, remorse; she recalls, if they do not, that Marat said, and repeated in the full Assembly that two hundred and seventy thousand heads must fall before he was satisfied. . . . Outside the crowd seethes in the heavy, hot night, surging round the closed doors of the *porte-cochère*; they gaze keenly, furiously on the squares of the lighted window of the *salon*, where, the rumour says, the murderess is being

questioned; they stare at that other sinister light that flickers from the other window, that of the bedroom, a strong light which glows across the street, on the faces of the crowd, which illuminates the houses opposite, which is crossed by the dark shadows of men—this leaping glow comes from the bowls of aromatics burnt round the corpse of Marat, those shadows are the doctors at their work.

It is past two o'clock in the morning and at last she appears, surrounded by police, followed by Drouet and Chabot, pale, serene, in her summer gown, rose and white, which is torn, but on which there is not a single drop of blood; her hair has now fallen from the pins, the work of the hairdresser's boy is undone, it hangs down to her waist in natural curls.

There is a violent movement, a violent shout in the crowd; they mean to tear her to pieces, she expects, almost wishes that they will do so.

The *fiacre* that brought her is still waiting, pressed upon by the mob for all those hours; Drouet motions her to enter; she does so, followed by the two deputies, it is seven hours since she entered Marat's house; the crowd refuses to allow the horse to start—"To the prison of the *Abbaye*," is the driver's direction, but he cannot obey, the way is blocked; the people demand an instant vengeance.

Drouet has energy and courage; it was he who arrested Louis XVI at Varennes; he knows how to make himself obeyed; he stands up in the carriage and commands loudly the people to allow the carriage to pass: "In the name of the law."

The mob surrounding the carriage falls back; a way is made, the horse proceeds; the prisoner has her first,

her only moment of weakness; Drouet finds her half fainting in her place.

"Is it possible," she murmurs, "that I am still alive?"

She is surprised that Drouet should have any authority over the crowd which had been represented to her as cannibals; she is astonished that they have any respect for the law; twice that day she had been certain of death, twice the law had saved her; she recovers her serenity as the doors of the *Abbaye* are reached by the driver of the hired *fiacre*.

The news rushes through Paris, "*Marat est mort, assassiné!*" Robespierre, in a panic, rushes to the shelter of the Clubs; armed bands run through the streets of Paris yelling, "*Marat est mort!*"

In Calvados the Comte de Puisaye falls back with his shamefully routed troops who were to have marched on Paris; in Caen, Barbaroux, Buzot and their fellows make ready for their last desperate flight with the broken battalions of Normandy.

Adam Lux runs out of his *hôtel* to learn what, in a city of blood and tumult, is this new cause for tumult; the streets are hot, foul, there is the rattle of drums, the gleam of bayonets, of pikes; Lux hears the echoing shout in the lantern-shot dark: "*Marat est mort! Assassiné par une femme du Calvados!*"

In the prison of the *abbaye* Charlotte de Corday is questioned once more, then falls asleep on her rude bed in the dismal cell.

July 13th, 1793, is over; she has achieved her task, she can take her rest.

"Marat is dead! Slain by a woman of Calvados!"



SEVEN

THE ALTAR OF THE COUNTRY



"Belle, jeune, brillante, aux bourreaux amenée,  
Tu semblais t'avancer sur le char d'Hyménée,  
Ton front resta paisible et ton regard serein,  
Calme sur l'échafaud, tu méprisas la rage  
D'un peuple abject, servile et fécond en outrage  
Et qui se croit encore et libre et souverain!"

*André Chénier* on Charlotte de Corday.

"La patrie ne peut subsister sans la liberté  
Ni la liberté sans la vertu."

*J. J. Rousseau.*

"Enfin! Je vais mourir pour Charlotte de Corday!"

*Adam Lux* on leaving prison for the scaffold.

Oct. 10th, 1793.

"There are some sacrifices, my Cordelia, on which  
the gods themselves throw incense."

*King Lear.*

JULY 14th, 1793—the Festival of Liberty, the fourth anniversary of the fall of the Bastille.

Paris was in a tumult—a deep-seated plot was feared. The *Montagnards* were alarmed, some of them were afraid—who might not be amongst them the agents of Pitt, of Coburg, of the *Gironde*?—what enemy at the gates of Paris? The journalists scribbled to inflame this Paris mob, which alone stood between the government of June 2nd and the hatred of the world. Placards were everywhere exhorting the people to vengeance for their destroyed idol; Robespierre urged on Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor, who wrote to the police to furnish him with the *procès-verbal* of the affair, that “an example as severe as prompt” might be made of the author of the death of “the brave and generous Republican Marat.” When the Convention met that morning, the President Saint-André announced at once: “Citizens! A great crime was committed yesterday on the person of a deputy. Marat is no more.”

To reassure themselves the *Montagnards* ordered the armed men of the 48 sections of Paris to march past the *Tuileries*; it was to the sound of the tramping feet and the drums of the *sans-culottes* that the Terrorists mouthed over their vengeance and the honours due to Marat.

“The *Panthéon*!” shrieked one Jacobin. Robespierre opposed this, and another yelled: “He’ll get there, despite your jealousy!”

Chabot read Guellard’s *procès-verbal* and denounced Barbaroux and Deperret as accomplices of

the assassin. Drouet, who had saved Mlle. de Corday from the people, sprang up and fanatically denounced her, demanding her instant punishment; Hanriot, whose cannon had driven the *Girondists* back into the Tuileries on June 2nd, screamed: "Vengeance for the death of the great man!"—and warned his colleagues "to be careful of green ribbons!" Then, weeping and demanding the *Panthéon* for Marat, he declared that Paris was riddled by a huge conspiracy. On Marat's door, draped with black crape, a placard, soon covered by the names of the faithful, exhorted the people in bad verse to:

"Arrête, Citoyen,  
Et vois ton défenseur!  
Il fut ton soutien  
Et te voua son cœur!"

Hébert, in the pages of *Père Duchêne*, excelled himself in invective; this "*garce de Calvados*" was sent by Bishop Fauchet—"a fury armed by the priests," and *Père Duchêne* urged his "*braves sans-culottes*" to demand "a more terrible, a more infamous punishment than the guillotine for the murderess." Guirault, the orator, extolling in the name of Paris the dead patriot, demanded the most frightful tortures for the woman of Calvados; Chabot, who had coveted her, avenged himself for his thwarted lust by demanding her instant sacrifice; he inflamed his hearers by describing the force and skill of the blow—"she had been well instructed."

The lame, tormented Georges Couthon, the panther, most savage of the *Montagnards*, accused Deperret

of complicity in the murder and declared that there was no question but that "this monster in female form" had been sent on her bloody errand by Buzot, Barbaroux and Salles and all the other conspirators who had taken refuge at Caen.

These furious denunciations proved the fear and anxiety of the *Montagnards*; they used every means in their power to rouse the fury of the people who, half-starved, excited, wholly misled, partly crazed by licence and bloodshed, paraded the streets with songs, drums, flags and yells.

Robespierre, always sly and shrewd, strove to profit by the death of his rival; with Danton he concocted the tale of a vast plot engineered by the Gironde against the government; Camille Desmoulins took the congenial work in hand; false witnesses appeared with strange stories; a woman had heard two men whispering of the assassination in the street; Chabot found public-house keepers, wine-sellers who had seen a carriage with three men and two women, one Fauchet, one Mlle. de Corday, descending mysteriously at an inn demanding secrecy; Fouquier-Tinville received letters denouncing plots in all parts of the country, in particular one from the Mayor of Strasbourg, who had impounded, he said, a violent diatribe against "those scoundrels the *Montagnards*, the *Jacobins*, the members of the *Commune*."

All this in the course of a few hours—during the sweltering heat of the July day. The gutter press rushed to the attack with their usual weapons of mud-slinging; the murderess was a coarse virago, black-browed, hideous, debauched, with the mask of a vixen, with an eruption in her face; hasty caricatures of her

were scrawled and published, cheap prints showing a fish wife with gross features—"une femme brune, noire, grosse et froide"—"malpropre, sans grâce . . . la figure dure insolente, erysipélateuse et sanguine."

In proportion to the outrages heaped upon the murderess were the praises showered on Marat; he was no less than a demi-god; a sculptor, the deaf and dumb Deseine, took that morning of July 14th a death mask of the contorted features of Marat, which were also modelled by Bonvallet; Guirault, rising in the Assembly, reminded one Jacques-Louis David, member for Paris, that he had painted the death of Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau and that here was another subject for his brush.

"I will paint it!" cried the creator of the Græco-Roman revival, and rushed off to collect his models.

Laurent Bas, the street porter, was brought before the Assembly and thanked for knocking down and securing the virago; the police were commended, the Clubs of the *Cordeliers* and the *Jacobins* disputed the heart of Marat; a deputy again demanded that his ashes should take the place of those of Mirabeau in the *Panthéon*; Robespierre asked the Jacobins to buy Marat's press; his funeral was to be at the expense of the nation: this, owing to the state of the body, had to take place immediately, and in consequence the trial of the murderess was postponed.

Deschamps worked hard at his loathsome task. The Assembly desired that Marat's corpse should be preserved as far as possible in order that they might show it to the people; it was intended to make a festival, an orgy of this funeral of the friend of the people; David, as showman-in-chief to the *Mountain*, was

consulted on this 14th day of July as to what was to be done with the body, which was to be displayed in the *ci-devant* church of the *Cordeliers*—since only parts of it could be exposed; Deschamps declared, “*Car vous savez qu’il avait une lèpre et que son sang était brûlé.*”

David thought that it would be “interesting” to show the patriot in the position in which he had met his death, seated in his bath and writing “for the happiness of the people.”

At midday, July 14th, Deschamps, in an atmosphere heavy with the fumes of the aromatics, proceeded to the embalmment; he was assisted by five pupils, and he put down his expenses, from the Sunday to the Tuesday (July 14th-16th), as 6,000 *livres*—for all the liquids, aromatics, linen employed, and for general out-of-pocket payments; in the garden of the *ci-devant Cordeliers*, Deschamps embalmed the heart of Marat, encased it in lead, and placed, in two separate vases, the entrails and the lungs; the *ci-devant* church was draped with the tricolour, with mourning scarves of crape, and “*le lit triomphal*” was prepared.

In the *Commune* Hébert pronounced the funeral eulogy of Marat, and everywhere, before the town hall, the Tuileries, the Clubs, the prisons, the house of Marat, the sweating crowd pressed, cursed, shouted, wept; it seemed as if Charlotte de Corday had achieved her end and had indeed cast terror and dismay into the midst of the tyrants.

Adam Lux, breaking from the prudence of his friends, ran the streets for news; his pamphlet had, in this hideous frenzy, dropped forgotten from the

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

press, but he cared nothing for that, he was on fire with a renewed enthusiasm—who was she, this heroine, was not she also a disciple of Rousseau, a reader of Plutarch?

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In the cell of the *abbaye* the prisoner sat in tranquil meditation; she knew nothing of the desperate frenzy that her act had roused; she was satisfied that she had done her task and that it would not prove in vain; she found the fury of the deceived, ignorant people very natural; while she pitied them, she still believed that the death of Marat would be the signal for the downfall of anarchy, the salvation of France.

During that hot Sunday she sat mending the torn white gown; the jailor's wife had lent her a needle and thread, her own had been taken from her; she had slept, she had been allowed to wash, to repair her dress, the people about her were kind; she was almost happy.

The *abbaye* was a prison constructed on the monastery of *Saint-Germain-des-Prés* nearly a hundred and fifty years before; Mlle. de Corday was given the cell lately occupied by Brissot, the leader of the *Girondists*; it was so small that there was only room for a bed, a table, a chair; the walls were filthy, the window heavily grilled, and the air was tainted by the odours from a ditch outside which the animals kept in the prison constantly fouled; it was, however, considered decent in comparison with some of the other cells and usually given to some distinguished prisoner.

On her arrival at the *abbaye* she had been again

examined and faced with various witnesses of no importance, such as the people from the *hôtel de la Providence* and her fellow-travellers from Evreux; she was distressed that her visit to Deperret had been discovered; if she had mentioned his name in the diligence it had been casually; it was natural that she, coming from Caen, should speak of Barbaroux; the address of Deperret had been on a piece of paper with two other addresses of friends, she thought she had destroyed it; for the rest she was resolute to inculcate no one.

At last she had been allowed to sleep, to wake naturally, to give some care to her person; there were two guards at her door continually spying on her; of one of them she asked "if the sky was clear?"

"I do not see a cloud anywhere," he replied.

"So," said Charlotte de Corday. "It is so with me. I feel most pleasantly at peace."

Yet there was nothing to soften her torment, no friend to comfort, to console, to strengthen her, she did not know her fate, when or where she was to die; she had no news of the Norman expedition that she hoped was marching on Paris, she had no means of knowing how her deed was regarded by those whose opinion she valued; but now, as always, she was self-sufficient, detached from the world, from her surroundings. The couple Delavaquerie who guarded her, the police at her door, all who saw her were overawed, almost uneasy; they had never seen such a creature before; there was something terrible in her innocence, in her beauty, in her gentleness, she seemed a saint, an angel.

The woman Delavaquerie gave her, on her request, some cambric and she made herself a bonnet and a



plain fichu; her hat had been left behind in Marat's *salon*, gentlewomen did not appear in public bare-headed, her rose-coloured fichu was soiled, torn and too *coquette*; she sewed tranquilly, awaiting her fate.

While she mended her dress she thought of Corneille who had patched his own shoes, and a smile touched her lips; at midday she took a little food, afterwards she was allowed writing materials in the hope that she would compromise some accomplices.

She used them to request two favours—first, she begged that she might be alone, at least at night, the police were constantly in her cell; she had already protested against this; she desired that, as a remembrance for her friends, her family, her portrait might be taken; with her ironic humour she wrote: "*As good citizens are commemorated by their portraits, so those of great criminals serve to evoke horror for their crimes, so deign, if you please, to pay attention to my request.*" She concluded on a tone of entreaty—"Je vous prie de m'envoyer demain un peintre en miniature, je vous renouvelle celle de me laisser dormir seule, croyez, je vous prie, à ma reconnaissance" [*sic*].

This letter was sent to the Committee of Public Safety and was dealt with by Chabot; both of the requests were refused, while the *Montagnards* carefully circulated their libellous caricatures of the prisoner.

Any news that might distress her she was given; in the afternoon she learned of the arrest of Deperret and Fauchet; the first troubled her profoundly—ah, if he had only taken her advice and fled! A brave, able man, pleasant and gay, with his young daughters, his laughing companions, his courtesy. . . . As for

Fauchet, she despised him; she had only seen him twice, each time from a window; the first occasion had been when, robed in rose-coloured silk, she had restrained her brother and M. de Tournéllis from rushing out to rebuke the insults of the mob who clamoured round Fauchet's departure from Caen.

She wrote down these facts and added: "*Fauchet is the last man in the world to whom I would have confided my project, if this declaration can serve him I declare the truth of it. Corday.*"

The next day, Monday, the 15th, she was informed by her keepers that the funeral of Marat would delay her trial; she had, then, still some hours of respite. She would, towards evening, she said, write another letter; a candle was brought in and she spread out her paper on the dirty table, dating it "Second day of the preparation of peace, from the chamber of Bissot."

It was to Charles Barbaroux she wrote; she had promised him news of her "enterprise"; she had made use of him, she owed it, perhaps, to him to explain her conduct; it pleased her, too, to think of the young deputy with his "Roman look," his noble presence, his impetuous enthusiasm for the cause that was her cause, too; writing to this man she seemed to be talking to a friend.

She wrote, easily and with humour, of the incidents of her journey, she made an amusing story of the stupid gallant who had tormented her with his attentions, gaily she put in the little details—so grotesque under the circumstances—of this impromptu wooing.

Then she explained her conduct, using a crystal-clear candour, a superb pride. "*They are very discontented here to have nothing but a woman without*

*importance (une femme sans conséquence) to offer to the manes of the great man. Pardon! O human beings! this word dishonours your species! This was a ferocious beast who meant to see France devoured by civil war!"*

She expressed her serene confidence that, the "monster" destroyed, peace would return, and she added: "*Heaven be thanked, he was not a Frenchman.*"

Then, with a return of ironic humour, her Norman shrewdness, she described the scene in Marat's house; "*I expected to be killed instantly; some brave men, beyond praise, saved my life*"; she noted the vanity of Legendre, the malice of Chabot—"who appeared to me a fool." She sighed out on the paper—"Je jouis délicieusement de la paix depuis deux jours, le bonheur de mon pays est le mien."

Then the main purpose of the letter appeared—she recommended her father, her friends the "*chers amis aristocrates*" to Barbaroux—if he was to chance to see any letter she had written to her father that contained "*quelques plaisanteries sur votre compte*" he was to take no notice—"Je suivais la légèreté de mon caractère."

As the coarse candle burnt down, as the fetid odours coming in from the fouled yard increased with the heat of the night, Charlotte de Corday's pen ran on; she fell, after her gaiety, her humour, into that strain which was natural to her, one of melancholy and grandeur: "*I have never hated but one being and I have shown with what violence, but there are a thousand I love more than I hated him. A lively imagination, a sensitive heart, promised me a stormy life; let*

*those who regret me consider this and let them rejoice to think of me in the Elysian Fields with some other friends. For the moderns—there are few true patriots who know how to die for their country; nearly all is egotism. What miserable people to found a Republic! At least, whatever government we have it will not be the Mountain . . .*

*"I am very well in my prison, the gaolers are the best possible people——"*

She related the refusal of Chabot to remove her guards at night—"only a Capuchin would have such ideas. . . . I employ my time writing songs in which I promise the Parisians that we will arm against nothing but the anarchy. It is exactly true."

The candle had burnt down; she folded up the unfinished letter and lay down on her rude bed, not knowing that Barbaroux and his friends were homeless wanderers in full flight from Caen.

Monday, July 15th, 1793, was over; throughout the hot night, here and there, wandered Adam Lux, trying to piece together the story of the woman from Calvados.

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July 16th, the embalmment of Marat, the preparations for his funeral proceeded; the unfaltering heat smote down on Paris; the family of Marat, represented by the brother and two sisters, Jean-Pierre, Albertine and Marie, clamoured for revenge, appealing to the Assembly for "an exemplary punishment" for the "traitor who has been arrested" and a vigorous search for her accomplices; Chabot was assisting Fouquier-Tinville to get together his accusation; as

the murder was that of a deputy, all that was necessary was the Revolutionary Tribunal, which would act as Judge and Jury; while the first formalities were being arranged Charlotte de Corday was moved secretly to the *Conciergerie*, where she was placed in a cell beyond the great hall where a barrier divided those condemned to death from the employés of the prison.

Here there was nothing save a solid bench clamped to the wall; the light falling from the thick-set windows was dulled by the dark grey of the walls; on even this brilliant day a dismal twilight filled the high gloomy chamber sheltering those doomed to die.

While she waited in her cell beyond, in her mended white dress, seated in the shadows, the funeral of Marat took place in the blazing sunshine outside.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Deschamps had found it extremely difficult to fulfil the wishes of David and to make a presentable display with Marat's remains; nor was his zeal increased by the instant refusal of the Assembly to pay him the 6,000 *livres* he had demanded; his account was reduced at once to 1,500 *livres*, after all the ingredients he had bought had been priced—"the honour of having helped to preserve the remains of so great a man should be sufficient payment for a Republican," observed one deputy.

The face and bosom of Marat had not been embalmed, they were turning, as Deschamps regretted, "a little black" by the Tuesday morning, but the odour was being overcome by aromatics, and it was hoped that the corpse would last out the festival.

It was placed in a lead coffin which was enclosed in a superb sarcophagus of purple porphyry taken from the collection of antiquities at the Louvre; a huge tricolour drapery, soaked in spirits, was swathed round the body in imitation of the old dressing-gown Marat had worn at the time of his death; it was hoped, by renewing this moisture from time to time, to arrest the decay of the body, already, as David remarked, "far advanced."

A right arm, the hand closed round a pen, hung over the edge of the bath; the filthy black hair was crowned by laurels; but the whole effect was more ghastly than imposing; it had been found impossible to shut either the eyes or the mouth of Marat, the expression of the last agony was clear on the putrefying features and it had been necessary to cut out the lolling tongue.

This repulsive idol was raised on a platform in the *ci-devant* church of the *Cordeliers*; it was then carried through Paris with all the pomp that such mourners and such times could provide. At five o'clock this grotesque procession started, the chariot on which Marat was taking his last ride being drawn by twelve men, while young girls, robed in white and carrying boughs of cypress, walked beside it; *sans-culottes*, *Jacobins*, the knitting women who counted the heads that fell daily from the guillotine, followed howling with grief and for vengeance on Charlotte de Corday; behind again, the deputies, officials, the Clubs, the crape-veiled drums, the musicians playing their funeral marches, Hanriot with the cannon that had quelled the *Gironde*, all the scum of Paris yelling revolutionary hymns; every five minutes there was a

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

discharge of artillery from the Pont-Neuf ; David, who was in charge of these ceremonies, had striven to give a classic air to this rag-tag of modernity which only resulted in a tawdry, sinister and bizarre magnificence, no doubt pleasing to the painter of *The Horatii*, the apostle of bad taste.

As the dark fell torches were lit ; at midnight the *cortège* returned to the garden of the *Cordeliers* where the grave had been prepared ; blocks of granite under hastily planted trees ; the section of Marseilles had claimed the honour of this burial in ground belonging to them ; the writings of Marat were placed in the grave, then the coffin, in which the body had been sealed, was lowered.

One citizen, in rushing to kiss the hand grasping the pen, spoiled one of David's stage effects ; the arm came off, it did not belong to Marat.

With cries of vengeance, with patriotic songs, with fervent speeches, the ceremonies were prolonged until two o'clock in the morning ; twenty orators praised Marat, the ex-lackey Brochet offered up a prayer : "O heart of Jesus ! O heart of Marat ! If Jesus was a prophet, Marat was a god !" There was no dissentient voice.

On the granite pyramid that formed the tomb was an urn ; on the front this inscription :

*ICI REPOSE MARAT*  
*l'ami du peuple assassiné par les*  
*ennemis du peuple*  
*Le 13 Juillet 1793*

The wretches awaiting death in the jails where Marat had sent them got news of these ceremonies

and the state of the corpse and composed another inscription:

*Ci-gît Marat le bienfaisant  
Qui nous apporta l'anarchie en régnant  
Et la peste en mourant*

One deputy wished Marat to be "embalmed again" and carried round the whole country; he was calmed by the promise of the later transference of Marat's remains to the *Panthéon*.

The ceremonies expanded into an orgy that embraced all Paris; there were dinners, dancing, *rites mystiques*, love-feasts, speeches in the desecrated churches, an hysteric saturnalia in the great heat, by the torch-light, to the sound of drums, cannons, yells and songs.

Half-maddened by these incredible scenes, unable to sleep or to eat, Adam Lux, his shirt unbuttoned, his hair flying, tormented by rage and horror, fled from place to place like a pure spirit suddenly cast into a circle of the damned.

Giraud, architect to the department of Paris, in his office, added up the accounts; the bankrupt nation had to pay highly for the apotheosis of Marat, from 2,400 *livres* to Martin who had designed the tomb, to 16 *livres* for lemonade and 34 *livres* for vinegar, 35 *livres* for satin tunic, to nearly 2,000 *livres* for flam-beaux and lamps; the total was 5,608 *livres*, 2 *sols*, 8 *deniers*.

In the sombre shade of the *Conciergerie*, Mlle. de Corday, in her small *cachot*, finished her letter to Barbaroux.

\* \* \* \* \*



At eleven o'clock that morning she had been taken to the *Palais de Justice* for the preliminaries of her trial; the witnesses had been examined, Marat's women, Laurent Bas, the *hôtel*-keeper, the waiter, the hairdresser; all was simple; she had slain Marat—alone, without accomplice or encouragement—she wished to rid France of a ferocious dictator. She wrote her testament that she might be known for what she was. She was told to choose a lawyer to defend her, and she named the deputy of Calvados whom she knew to be in Paris, the Comte Doulcet de Pontécoulant, whom she had known so well in Caen.

Her unfinished letter to Barbaroux had been seized, she asked for its return, it was promised, and if she finished it, it should be sent.

This was a trap, but Mlle. de Corday accepted it as a courtesy.

Two *agents de police* were with her in the *cachot* as she wrote rapidly, in her bold handwriting, by the light of the tallow candle given her by the couple Richard who kept the women's quarters of the jail.

Everything was nearly over now; her trial was fixed for eight o'clock the next morning; the result could not be in doubt; she would not see another night.

As if she spoke to a friend she related the events of the day to Barbaroux, evoking, in these hideous surroundings, his brilliancy, his courtesy, his enthusiasm.

*"I do not think Doulcet will refuse the honour of defending me . . . all I may possess I leave to the women and children of Calvados . . . I was amazed at the moderation of the crowd—they allowed*

*me to be brought here without molesting me . . . pray do not forget Mlle. de Forbin . . . to-morrow at eight o'clock I am to be judged, probably at midday I shall have lived, to use the language of the Romans . . . there will be some value put on the people of Galvados when it is shown that even the women are capable of firmness . . . no one knows how the last moments pass and it is the end that crowns the work. I have no need to affect insensibility on my fate, for until this instant I have not felt the least fear of death . . . Fauchet is said to have taken me to the Convention to a tribune—as a deputy he should not have been on the tribunes, as a bishop not with a woman . . . Deperret has nothing to reproach himself with . . . I think Marat will not go to the Panthéon . . . I hope I have helped Wimpfen to gain more than one battle. Farewell, citizen, I recommend myself to the true friends of peace. The prisoners here, far from cursing me like the people in the street, seem to pity me, unhappiness always brings compassion; this is my last reflection.—Corday. Tuesday, 16th, at 8 o'clock of the evening."*

One other letter to write when this is signed, a letter addressed to M. Corday, *rue du Bègle*, at Argentan, written slowly, firmly, while the cannon for Marat sound in the hot night without.

*"Pardon me, my dear papa, for having disposed of my existence without your permission. I have avenged many innocent victims, I have prevented many other disasters. The people one day, being disabused, will rejoice that they were delivered of a tyrant. I tried to*

*persuade you that I was going to England, for I wished to preserve my incognita, but I found this impossible. I hope that you will not be tormented, but in any case I believe that you will find defenders at Caen.*

*"I have taken as advocate (défenseur) Gustave Doulcet. Such a deed permits of no defence, it is only a formality. Farewell, dear papa, I beg you to forget me, or rather to rejoice at my fate, the cause is so beautiful. I embrace my sister whom I love with all my heart, also all my relations.*

*"Do not forget the verse of Corneille:*

*"'The crime and not the scaffold brings the disgrace.'*

*"It is to-morrow at 8 o'clock that I am to be judged. This 16th July.*

*"Corday."*

A line to be added to the letter to Barbaroux.

*"I have written a word to papa, I say nothing to my other friends; I ask of them nothing but a prompt forgetfulness—their affliction would dishonour my memory."*

But elsewhere in her letter she had written: *"Break the news of my death gently to Bougan-Langrais."*

The prison was noisy, echoing with the excitement of Marat's funeral; the cannonading was incessant, but when Mlle. de Corday had finished her two letters she lay down peacefully for her last sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tribunal before which Mlle. de Corday appeared was presided over by Montané, a former magistrate; he had two fellow-Judges, Foucault and Roussillon; the Jury consisted of fourteen men, none of whom was of any distinction; the citizens, Fallot, Lacrampe, Fualdès, Le Roi, Gannay, Sion, Guillier, Derbez, Paget, Brochet, Thoumien, Brichet, Godin and Chrétien, and Duplain.

This *tribunal révolutionnaire* had been established, largely by Marat's advice and assistance, to deal with political crimes—*i.e.*, with offences against the government; it was therefore, under the guise of a strict legality, a useful instrument of tyranny, as effective as the old *lettre de cachet* of the Kings, since it had absolute power of life or death, and since Judges and Jury were always in the government interest. This tribunal worked with the swiftness of a drum-head court martial; its death sentences were carried out the same day as pronounced and so little chance of life had anyone brought before this tribunal that it seemed as if it had been instituted merely to provide a spectacle for the people that should whet their appetite for the even more terrible drama of the executions.

This tribunal was under the authority of the Committee of Public Safety, of which it was the instrument; both were supposed to represent the sovereignty of the people and did, in truth, satisfy the debauched, half-crazy blood lust of the Paris mob. But it did not, in truth, in any way represent the people of France, but only the section of terrorists who had usurped the government.

The sittings of this tribunal were held in the *Palais*

*de Justice (Conciergerie)* in the old *Cour de Cassation*—renamed *Salle Egalité*.

This chamber was divided by a barrier, half for the public, half for the tribunal, which occupied a semi-circle of raised seats, the Jury, protected by police and ushers in front, the Judges behind, the President seated above all, with his table in front of him, and his clerks at the side; to the right of this estrade was the Public Prosecutor's place, to the left that of the prisoner; the rest of the chamber, the *salle des pas perdus*, the staircase were occupied by a vast, seething crowd, animated by curiosity, cruelty, sentimentality and the hysteria bred of anarchy.

The prisoner, escorted by guards, entered the Court through a door in the wall which led to a back staircase from which she had been brought directly from her prison; she was taken to her place, which was furnished with a chair, and surrounded by armed men; she faced the tribunal.

It was an imposing array that met the calm gaze of Mlle. de Corday; the magistrates wore a costume calculated to overawe, black habits, black mantles draped like togas, huge hats turned up from their faces, bound with ribbons and rendered more monstrous by high double cockades, one black, one tricolour, white cravats, and, on the bosom, a medal suspended from a tricolour ribbon, bearing the head of Liberty in the Phrygian bonnet, and the emblem of the Roman fasces. The symbols of those antique ages so adored by Charlotte de Corday had been adopted by the tyrants whom she abhorred; the mania for classicism had spread from the intellectuals to the gutter; Louis XVI, to placate the sentiment of the moment,

had ordered a *Brutus* from David, and now the *sans-culottes* who had never heard of Greece twisted their red cotton night-caps into a semblance of a head-gear worn in Asia Minor three thousand years before, and the bundle of fasces was admired as an emblem of democracy by hordes who knew nothing of the haughty rulers before whom they had been once borne.

A deep sound, half hiss, half sigh, rose from the packed crowd jostling in the *Salle Egalité*; the prisoner was placed as if in a pillory, so that everyone could see her, and as her white-clad figure appeared, the only woman amongst so many men, all the emotions of the people were blended into an intense curiosity, everything was subordinated to the greedy desire not to lose an instant of this extraordinary drama; even the hostility of the crowd sank, they stared, hushed. The heat was almost insupportable, the air stale and soon tainted; even at eight o'clock the thermometer showed 30° *Réaumur*.

Mlle. de Corday remained standing while the Jury were sworn in; she wore the white muslin dress that she had selected to please Marat and that she had so carefully mended and adjusted, the plain kerchief and cap that she had made herself in the prison of the *abbaye*; there was nothing theatrical about her appearance, she had not sought in any way to appear dramatic, romantic, touching, a heroine; her majesty, her dignity came from her complete sincerity, her unshaken fortitude, what appeared her disdain of men came from her complete detachment from the world.

She was keenly observed, and not only by the eyes of Judges, Jury and the curious public; among the

press were the terrible spies of the Committee of Public Safety, the *observateurs* who were employed to report on the behaviour of everyone, from the President to the prisoner, and to denounce anyone suspected of disloyalty to the government.

One of these trained and indifferent spectators noted and reported "the calm and majesty" of the prisoner, her complete lack of remorse, the extraordinary effect of her beauty and her courage on this crowd which had come to insult her; there was even a movement of sympathy, of admiration, she seemed to hold them all in subjection, *comme sous pression*; only the most brutal, used to horrors, hardened by vice, hissed and muttered, half mechanically.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Jury sworn in, the prisoner is allowed to seat herself, her identity is established and this formality over, Montané asks her if she has an advocate?

"I chose a friend; apparently he has not had the courage to accept my defence."

President Montané looks round and perceives close to the barriers, among the crowd, Claude-François Chauveau-Lagarde, a jurisconsult and magistrate, and orders this lawyer to undertake the defence of the prisoner, appointing one Grenier to act as his clerk.

The two men make their way to the dock and seat themselves near Mlle. de Corday, who looks at them troubled, mistrustful—how shall these two of her enemies know the defence she would make?

But Chauveau-Lagarde seems a gentleman, and his air is not without distinction, he is about thirty-five, carefully dressed in the gloomy impressive republican

style; she is a little reassured when the President calls her to order; she is to pay attention to the witnesses; she does so courteously, though it is all such a senseless formality; have not these petty people already made their little clamour? Coachman, *hôtel*-keeper, street porter—all here again with their tongues eager against her; her indifference is broken when Simonne Evrard appears; in her letter to Barbaroux she had written: "*I was moved by the cries of those whom I had made unhappy, but he who serves his country cannot count the price*"; and now, again, she is moved by the animal grief of this faithful woman, and tries to spare her the recital which she breaks with sobs and tears; what need for all this? Charlotte de Corday has done it and she is willing to pay that price which cannot be counted.

"Yes, it was I who killed Marat. I wished to slay him on the summit of the *Mountain*—I should have preferred this to any other way—I was so sure, in that case, that I should have been instantly the victim of the fury of the people. I was supposed to be in London, my name would have been unknown."

Montané reproaches her with the two letters she wrote to Marat, the lies she used to gain admittance to his house.

"I am aware that the means I used were not worthy of me, but they were good enough to save the country. Besides, if I had not appeared to esteem him I should never have been admitted to his presence; such a man is always suspicious."

She is urged to confess her accomplices—did not the *Girondists* at Caen inspire her with their fury against Marat?



"I had no need of the hatred of others. I had sufficient of my own."

She is questioned about her political opinions—where did she find the courage for this crime?

"I was a republican before the revolution and I have never lacked energy."

Lauze Deperret and Fauchet are mentioned as her accomplices; to save the first she disputes, inch by inch, with Norman shrewdness and tenacity, striving to prove that Marat had not even been mentioned between them, proving it, indeed, were there justice to listen to her, so obvious are her candour, her integrity; Deperret, under arrest, is brought in as witness; his story confirms hers, and soon, for lack of evidence, he is released, but he is doomed; she can do no more for him—as for Fauchet, "I despise him," she says quietly.

In her anxiety to help Deperret she leans forward to address the President; her voice is so soft, so touching in its candour, her face is so lovely in its entire unconsciousness, she seems so young, almost a child in her virginal dignity, her motive is so noble, "to rid the world of a monster, to give peace to her wretched country," that everyone there is troubled, faintly bewildered.

How can this tribunal pronounce on such a deed, such a prisoner?

Claude-François Chauveau-Lagarde is, above all, troubled; her defence has been entrusted to him, she has aroused his chivalry, disturbed his conscience, and he can do nothing for her; he is seated so near to her that he feels the perfume of this terrible purity, sees in every detail this beauty no one can disregard; he

has taken the place of a friend who has failed her—he has seen her look at him coldly, with distrust; Chauveau-Lagarde puts his hand before his eyes as if they ached from the acrid sour air, the cruel heat; she is so fragile in her delicate femininity, so strong in her unshakable fortitude; her advocate does not care to look either at her or at the Public Prosecutor, that man of blood, Antoine-Quentin Fouquier-Tinville, farmer's son, ex-police clerk, with his thin-lipped, flat, vicious face, ruined by debauchery, with his bantering jests, his black-clad figure.

Chauveau-Lagarde, silent, watchful, notes the three questions that distress his client, three only that shake her composure.

"How many children have you?"

She blushes deeply as she answers Fouquier-Tinville's brutal question:

"You know I have never been married."

Even in that company there is no laughter.

Her two letters are mentioned; that to Barbaroux has been seized and published; that to her father has been read; with emotion she begs that it may be sent to M. de Corday.

"Is this the knife?"

It is shown to her stained with blood, the knife she had bought for 40 *sols* in the early morning in the *ci-devant Palais Royal*.

"Yes! Yes! I recognise it! I recognise it!" She turns aside with disgust.

Fouquier-Tinville details the blow; the skill of it, given by a practised hand. . . .

"Ah," cries the prisoner, "does this wretch take me for a murderess?"

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

The uneasiness of Chauveau-Lagarde increases; she is being baited, insulted; they are trying to disturb all she has, her tranquillity, her belief in the righteousness of her deed, to undermine her courage; and they all know she is doomed, but they must have some sport out of her first; she has been more merciful; with Marat death was *foudroyante*; "they say he spoke after I struck," she wrote to Barbaroux. "I do not think so."

They try to attack her through her faith—is not she *ci-devant* noble—at heart of the old faith which says: "Thou shalt do no murder?"

"Did you confess to a frocked or an unfrocked priest?"

"To neither. I have no confessor."

At last, they can think of no more questions; Montané asks her if she has anything to say?

"Only this—the chief of anarchy is no more—you have peace."

There is a solemn pause in the court; the heat increases; the air is charged with electricity, a storm gathers slowly outside, where sulphurous clouds overspread the blazing sun that has shone so brilliantly since Charlotte de Corday left Caen.

Claude-François Chauveau-Lagarde rises, a fair, elegant man profoundly distressed; while the Public Prosecutor was speaking he received two notes, one from the Jury bidding him say nothing, one from the President bidding him plead lunacy; he sees that they wish to humiliate her; but his one thought is to please this young woman whom he believes, having watched her and heard her speak, he understands; he cannot save her, but perhaps he can please her; there

is a heavy confused noise, like an expression of stupor, then a silence that freezes Chauveau-Lagarde to the heart. He looks at Charlotte de Corday, he sees in her face that "she will not be justified."

She has avowed murder and the proofs are there; legally she is guilty, but not according to her conscience nor to that of her defender; her glance gives him an inspiration for his hopeless task; he speaks suddenly and briefly.

"My client admits this murder; she premeditated it, in the very presence of death she shows no remorse, nothing but political conviction could have armed her hand and given her this calm, this sublime abnegation. I commend myself to the prudence of the Jury."

He sits down and glances at the prisoner; there is an expression of satisfaction on her fair face; he has pleased her and he feels a curious exaltation.

"Citizens of the Jury, is it proved that on the 13th July instant, between seven and eight in the evening, Jean-Paul Marat, deputy to the National Convention, was assassinated in his home, in his bath, by a blow from a knife, the said blow having instantly slain him?

"Is the author of this assassination Marie-Anne Charlotte de Corday, *ci-devant* d'Armont, ex-noble, inhabitant of Caen?

"Did she do it with premeditation and criminal intention?"

\* \* \* \* \*

At twelve o'clock the Jury retired to consider these questions; the last had been altered from the form given it by Fouquier-Tinville, who had prefixed "Anti-

revolutionary" to the words "criminal intention."

They were absent an hour and a half; there was an amazed feeling in the crowd that the impossible had been achieved, that there would be an attempt to save Charlotte de Corday. From all sides there had been murmurs of sympathy, Chauveau-Lagarde had been obviously moved, Montané had seemed troubled and now the Jury were so long absent; the crowd was *bouleversée*; the attitude of the prisoner, calm, noble, after four hours of this public exposure, filled them with a sense of panic, as if an angel or a goddess had come into their midst; she had seen one of the National Guard sketching her features and had courteously posed for him.

The Jury returned—the verdict was "Guilty."

"It is proved."

They dared say nothing else; their position was farcical, since they were at the mercy of the mob outside; they appeared uneasy, cowed.

President Montané, pale beneath his enormous hat and plumes, read the death sentence; the prisoner's superb tranquillity, that was so unforced, so free from vanity, affected him and all the members of the tribunal; only Fouquier-Tinville remained implacable, demanding blood.

Mlle. de Corday had one request to make; she asked to be taken to Chauveau-Lagarde, who had moved into the body of the hall; her guards took her to the young lawyer whose looks betrayed his emotion; Mlle. de Corday d'Armont, *noble dame*, of pure Norman blood, spoke as if she were in her own *salon*.

"Monsieur, I thank you warmly for the courage with which you have defended me in a manner worthy

of yourself and of me. These gentlemen have confiscated all my property, but I can give you a greater proof of my gratitude—I ask you to pay for me what I owe in the prison and I count on your generosity.”

He accepted, too touched to say much; she left between her guards for her prison; the white-clad figure with the brilliant hair and the noble bearing disappeared through the little door in the wall; a sigh, like relief from an overwhelming emotion, broke from the crowd; outside the thunder began to roll.

\* \* \* \*

The tribunal had risen, Charles Henri-Sanson, the executioner, awaited the orders of Fouquier-Tinville, who had drawn Montané into a closet to abuse him for suppressing the words “anti-revolutionary.”

Did he, then, wish to save the prisoner by offering her a loophole of escape? Why had he told Chauveau-Lagarde to plead lunacy?

The President replied that he had wished to humiliate the prisoner; the argument continued for an hour; when Fouquier-Tinville left the *cabinet* he had decided on the arrest of Montané.

Sanson was waiting for him; the Public Prosecutor gave him his authority for the execution of Charlotte de Corday—a printed form with the name and date filled in by hand; the execution was to take place at five o'clock the same day, July 17th, on the *place de la Révolution*; the necessary soldiery were to be at the *Conciergerie* at three o'clock.

\* \* \* \*

Mlle. de Corday returned to her cell; with exquisite

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

courtesy she excused herself for not having been able to share the *déjeuner* of the couple Richard. When she had left that morning she had said that she would return in time, as *ces messieurs* would be in a hurry.

A priest, the *abbé* Lothringer, came to offer her "the consolations of religion"; he was an unfrocked priest who attended the prisoners.

Mlle. de Corday had no need of him; she had nothing to confess, she had no need of absolution; she dealt direct with the God who had inspired her; her pure mystic faith had little need of the Church that had sheltered a Fauchet, a Chabot; she had long had her vocation.

Besides, she wished to be alone, refused to compromise, to involve anyone.

"Thank those who sent you, I am grateful for their good-will, but I have no need of your ministrations."

She took a little food, a little repose, she adjusted her toilette after these long hours of heat and fatigue.

The man who had been sketching her portrait in court had received permission to visit her in her *cachot* and finish his work.

She was very willing to allow him this favour; she thought still of a souvenir for her friends, her family.

The painter was one Hauer, who had been a pupil of David, and then was a captain in the National Guard; his drawing had been done roughly on an odd piece of paper, with a poor pencil; as he improved it, the prisoner made suggestions and posed for him, gazing in front of her with a gentle expression, her beautiful arms and hands folded on her breast.

As if she had been a well-bred lady at ease in her own *salon* entertaining a guest, she talked of ordinary

affairs with Hauer; so sincere was she in her self-abnegation, so utterly without any affectation of grandeur or any self-display, that the couple Richard and the guards themselves felt the kind of panic that had swept over the tribunal, the crowd in the *Salle Egalité*, as if some superhuman creature were among them.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

Sanson and the chief jailer Fabricus arrived at the lodging of the couple Richard; the woman was frightfully livid and trembling.

"Are you ill?" demanded Sanson.

"Wait, and perhaps your heart will fail, too," she replied.

He entered the cell, accompanied by two ushers of the tribunal, Tirraz and Monet.

The prisoner was seated, writing on a piece of paper on a book that rested on her knee; a guard stood near; Hauer was sketching her face.

She looked, paled slightly, and exclaimed: "What! Already!"

Then she finished her letter and, tranquil again, listened while Monet and Tirraz read her sentence.

She had no comment to make; she folded her letter in eight and gave it to Monet; it was addressed to Doulcet de Pontécoulant and contained some words of cold rebuke.

*"The citizen Doulcet de Pontécoulant is a coward to have refused to defend me, when the task was so easy—he who undertook this did it with all the dignity possible. I shall remember him with gratitude until my last moment.—Marie de Corday."*



With a sigh for this false friend she had a glow of pleasure in thinking of the stranger who had understood her so completely.

There was no time for delays; it was already late; what must be done was explained to her; she set a chair in the middle of the cell and took off her bonnet; Sanson cut off the brilliant locks; when he had nearly finished she took the scissors from his hands, severed a ringlet herself and gave it to Hauer.

"Monsieur, I thank you for what you have done for me, I have nothing to offer you but this lock of hair; pray accept it in memory of a poor dying creature—and allow me to beg of you a copy of your portrait for my family."

She also gave a curl to Sanson, and another to Richard for his wife, who was sick with emotion and unable to appear.

"Do you think Marat will go to the *Panthéon*?" she asked; Richard was too overwhelmed to reply.

The red gown worn by assassins was brought; refusing to accept help she passed it over her head herself; it was too large and hung low, having never been worn by a woman before; she folded her fichu over her breast.

"Here is a death toilette made by hands a little rude, but it will lead to immortality," she smiled.

Hauer, who thought her even more beautiful, more touching in this array, sketched her again as the executioner tied her hands and feet.

She was ready; at half-past six the cart was in the courtyard; it contained a chair, a stool, some straw; Mlle. de Corday mounted it; she was the only person to die that evening; a mighty storm rolled over Paris;

the rain poured down steadily, the lightning was incessant. The roll of the thunder obscured the yells of the crowd that greeted the cart as the gates of the *Palais de Justice* opened and Charlotte de Corday was seen, standing erect in her red robe, confronting the storm.

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Adam Lux had been in a fever all that day, eating nothing but a little bread; he and his friend Forster had read the letter to Barbaroux finished in prison the previous evening.

Adam Lux had been overwhelmed. In the papers hot from the Press, he read the proud replies of the prisoner before the tribunal that morning; he had not been able to bring himself to go to the trial, but, after an exhausting ebb and flow of feeling, he decided to see this extraordinary woman pass to her death.

He had declared that never had there been anything like her letter—it went to his heart like a wound; she was a heroine; yes, in the midst of this furious, this incredible anarchy, a heroine had appeared.

He had wished to be a Marcus Curtius, and here was an Iphigenia, an Antigone; he heard she was young, fair, not like the libels spread about the city; he broke from Forster and plunged into the storm, the press, the chaos of traffic, soldiers, police, mob, to see her pass. Forster accompanied him, and the two deputies from Mayence forced their way to the *rue Saint-Honoré*.

The violence of the storm heightened the frenzy of the people, many of whom were still drunk from their night-long orgies in celebration of Marat's funeral and who were urged on by the four hundred women

who had been the furies of the September massacres ; dazzled by the lightning, soaked by the rain, exhausted by the intense heat and their debaucheries, deafened by the thunder the mob surged, yelled and fought with the soldiers that Pache, Mayor of Paris, had sent to prevent the assassin of Marat from being murdered in the streets.

Jostled by these foul hordes, evading pikes, flags, drums, the two Germans, driven onward by the frantic enthusiasm of Lux, arrived at the edge of the press, close to the way the soldiers kept for the death-cart.

It came into view, veiled by the sheets of rain, proceeding slowly, the frightened horse rearing and jibbing, soldiers before and behind. Sanson on his chair, the prisoner standing.

Adam Lux saw nothing but this figure ; his emotion transported him out of himself, it seemed to him as if he stood beside her in the cart.

Her bearing was not only brave, but noble and gentle. The thin red robe, soaked through, clung closely, showing her virginal shape, like that of a classic statue ; her blue eyes gazed steadfastly, serenely on that hideous scene ; she did not wince either before the storm or the human curses.

Lux, shaking off the restraining hand of Forster, shouldered and pushed through the crowd, following the cart to the place of execution.

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Danton, Robespierre, Desmoulins watched from a window to see how this woman could die ; from another house André Chénier gazed, his heart on fire ; a boy took a rose from his coat and cast it into the cart. The



EXECUTION OF CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY

*From James Idaripila's engraving of the painting by F. Beys.*



prisoner looked about her curiously, at this city she had never seen before.

Once she seemed to sway.

"You find the way long?" asked Sanson, pitying her exhaustion, her courage.

"Bah!" she replied. "We are sure to arrive some time."

He offered her his chair, she refused it; she would not betray the least weakness, and steadied herself against the stool; it was difficult to keep erect with bound hands and the jolting cart.

The thunder rolled away, the rain ceased, the lightning flickered into the distance, the clouds thinned overhead as the cart reached the *Place de la Révolution, ci-devant* Place Louis XV.

Sanson placed himself so that she should not see the guillotine; she evaded him and stared up at the sinister structure rigid against the torn clouds.

"I have a right to be curious, I have never seen it," she smiled.

Alone she walked up the steps; as an assistant snatched off her fichu, showing her bosom, she coloured violently; as she reached the platform she was pale and tranquil again.

A lurid beam of tawny sunlight pierced the dun thunder-clouds that sailed away above the city and the river as she stood a second before the plank; she wished to speak to the people; this was forbidden; she was tied on the plank, it was pushed forward, the angular knife fell.

A carpenter's man snatched up the head and struck the cheek; a murmur of rage arose from the crowd, Sanson angrily rebuked the offender; those who stood

nearest the scaffold declared that the cheeks of the severed head had blushed at this final insult.

Adam Lux, mad with enthusiasm, fury, exaltation, his long hair hanging wet on his haggard cheeks, ran and stumbled back to his *hôtel* and began to write his essay—"Charlotte Corday."

His one desire was to die on the scaffold where she had perished—and to die soon.

E I G H T

THRENODY



“Noble victime, ta mort fut donc inutile à ta patrie! La rage de ces séditieux triomphe pour toujours et avec le rire amer du sarcasme ils foulent pour toujours la grande nation dans la poussière! La Liberté remonte au ciel et ne reviendra jamais, et ceux qui l’ont blasphémée, ne pourront l’apaiser!”

*Klopstock.*

“The Lord had gifted Judith with a special beauty and fairness.”

*Old Testament.*

**A**S Charlotte de Corday had had the one resolve to which everything else was subordinated—to kill the tyrant and to perish herself—so Adam Lux had only one resolve, to honour her memory and to die as she had died.

He did not approve of the murder of Marat; he believed that any deed of violence would increase anarchy, and he thought that Marat, monster as he might be called, was not an absolute tyrant, but a mouthpiece of a section of the people.

Neither could he share Charlotte de Corday's conviction that peace would be given to France by the removal of Marat; he lived too near the heart of events; he had, despite his exaltation, too clear a masculine judgment to share such an illusion. He saw behind Marat, Danton and his lieutenant, Desmoulins, Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just; he knew the power held by such petty ruffians as Hébert and Coffinhal, Collot d'Herbois and Chaumette, the grip of the gutter press on the gutter bred, the blood-lust that had been roused among the base, the vile, the starving. Sudden civil war, threatened invasion, the fruits of years of corruption, of a decaying system of government had brought about a reign of Terror which could not be stayed even by a Charlotte de Corday.

The blood of Marat was like the dragon's blood: while it yet smoked a thousand dragons sprang from it. Marat dead was more powerful than Marat alive, and his murder had been one more excuse to pursue the Gironde to death, to inflame the people against all

that was reasonable, moderate and decent.

The Club of the *Cordeliers*, the day after the execution of Charlotte de Corday, held a *fête* to celebrate the translation of Marat's heart; no artist was considered worthy of designing a casket "for a treasure so precious," so a vase, formed of a single agate enriched with precious gems, was taken from the royal collections to enshrine the relic.

Scenes of hysteria amounting to dementia took place in the gardens of the Luxembourg, where before an altar decorated with palms, cypress boughs and tri-colour flags, twenty-four members of the *Convention* and twelve of the *Commune*, gathered to hear frenzied orators again compare Marat to Christ and Simonne Evrard to the Virgin Mary—because "*Marie a sauvé l'Enfant Jésus en Egypte, l'autre (Simonne) a soustrait Marat au glaive de Lafayette qui, comme Hérode, l'aurait éborgné.*"

This was more than party enthusiasm, it was the cult of an idol which had hundreds of thousands throughout France in its grip.

To Marat had succeeded Robespierre, and the neat lawyer from Arras, chaste, moral and precise, was as terrible as the Genevan Calvinist with his disease and his rags.

Had, then, Mlle. de Corday died in vain?

Adam Lux believed so; many more victims would have to be thrown into this gulf before it was closed; the Norman heroine had been wrong, mistaken, deluded.

But Adam Lux could sympathise most deeply with her mistake, her delusion; he could see her deed from her point of view, and he believed that from the

highest standard her sacrifice had not been in vain, for she had shown, amid a welter of crime, cowardice and horror, enough to make an Adam Lux despair of his fellows, an example of brilliant courage, of what Chauveau-Lagarde had dared to call "sublime abnegation"; she had raised humanity to the peak of achievement at the very moment when, in the very place where, it had sunk into a slough of degradation.

However useless her sacrifice might seem, it was as well, for the credit of mankind, that someone should affirm a noble indignation against anarchy by such a deed.

So argued Adam Lux, as, with the storm still rolling over Paris, the lurid skies split by distant lightning, the tawny rays of the setting sun glittering on the reddened knife of the guillotine, he proceeded to cast on paper his "*Charlotte Corday*."

In vain Forster argued with him; this time he was not to be restrained; his pen flew over the paper in a glowing panegyric.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adam Lux was not alone in having been overwhelmed by the grandeur of this Norman girl.

André Chénier, the elegant, the romantic high minded poet, had seen her pass and had inscribed to her magnificent verses in which he painted her as "young, beautiful, brilliant," going to her death as on a chariot of Hymen, and declared that her statue should be placed between those of Harmodius and Aristogiton, who delivered Athens from the Pisistratidæ and had received the honours of immortality.

Even among those who had stood under the storm

inspired by a lewd curiosity or a vulgar malice, to watch the assassin of Marat go to her death, there had been those who had been touched by her superb fortitude. Many a hat had been raised as she had passed, many a tear been shed, some of those who had come to see her die turned back, not having the courage to witness her death.

What effect, then, did this woman, so beautiful and so remarkable, not have on a generous, a noble soul, already reduced to despair by disillusionment!

Adam Lux refused food and sleep while he poured out his heart on paper.

Forster had admired the magnanimous calm of Charlotte de Corday: "her beauty, her charm, the halo of innocence and candour that surrounded her," the purity of her soul manifest in her demeanour, *la belle force héroïque* that she showed in accepting the full consequences of her act, without complaint or weakness.

In writing to his wife of the heroine, Forster described the "serenity of her visage, the calm of her attitude" when relating the death of Charlotte de Corday; he declared that it was obvious that she loved liberty and the Republic with enthusiasm, and that her memory would always live in "the hearts of those who admired simple grandeur."

But he tried to restrain Adam Lux from publicly proclaiming his enthusiasm for this "unique and immortal memory"; Paris was in full "Terror"; the cause of the *Gironde* had been hopelessly lost and the heads fell daily on the *Place de la Révolution* and on nearly every market-square in France.

Adam Lux refused to listen; in the intervals

between the composition of his brochure and his snatched sleep he went about Paris, in the burning July heat still sulphurous and sombre, collecting details about Charlotte de Corday.

\* \* \* \*

Her story did not end with her death; there were poignant and dreadful details to inflame the fury, the enthusiasm of Adam Lux.

The carpenter's assistant's blow on her dead cheek had raised murmurs of rage even from that crowd; Sanson had vehemently denied complicity in this infamy; Antoine-François Sergent-Marceau, a deputy, had written to the President of the Criminal Court a fiery protest against the outrage, in which, while wholly blaming Charlotte de Corday as a "*monstre*," he had remarked on her serenity, the nobility of her conduct, which had silenced her enemies, and denounced "the feeble and atrocious outrage" of the man who, in showing the head to the crowd, had struck it across the still palpitating cheek.

If this act filled a *Maratiste* with horror, what rage and despair did it not arouse in an Adam Lux, and how unendurable was this added detail—that the severed head had blushed, from pain, said some, from indignation, said others; several witnesses who had stood close to the scaffold had attested to this terrible blush, and doctors entered into an argument as to whether or not it was possible that the severed head was capable of sensation? Some said that the wretch's hand was blood-stained and it was this sinister red that had coloured the dead face, others that the storm light of the sun, then parting the livid clouds, had

given this last glow of colour to Charlotte de Corday's cheeks. Those who had known her remembered her modesty, her pride, and that she had blushed easily and frequently.

Nor was this the only sacrilege; calumny threw mud at her memory; she was described in the press as debauched, the mistress of a succession of priests, royalists, *Girondists*—her pockets had been full of false money, she had gloated with fiendish relish over Marat's dead body, she was a virago with her mouth full of obscene language, and when she was condemned to death she had declared herself four months with child, in order to prolong her life until the Federalists should have reached Paris.

The same lie had been uttered of Jeanne d'Arc.

The medical evidence refuted these slanders; the body of Charlotte de Corday was taken to the *Hôpital de la Charité*, where an autopsy was performed in the presence of several doctors, of the painter David, and several other deputies and journalists eager to dishonour the memory of the assassin of Marat.

They were disappointed; one of them exclaimed in disgust: "*Le monstre fut une fille, vertueuse de la vertu des femmes, c'est-à-dire chaste.*"

An engraving of this scene, hastily executed, showed the body on a plank, the head laid to the neck, the white gown put on for the seduction of Marat, soaked with blood to the waist and being removed by the hands of malice and curiosity.

What maddening details were these for the sensitive nerves of a man who had given up medicine because he could not face the study of anatomy? There was but one consolation; she could not have guessed what

## THRE NODY

they would do to her; among all the terrors she had faced, she had not faced that. There were some suspicions and some curiosities of which mankind was capable of which she would never dream.

When the prying eyes of her enemies had done with her she was buried in the cemetery of the Madeleine, *rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré*, in the common *fosse*, her grave being No. 5; that next, No. 4, contained, under a heap of quick-lime, the remains of the man whose health she had refused to drink that May evening when she had been gay in rose-coloured taffetas—Louis XVI; No. 6 was yet empty; it was filled, a few months later, by the body, also decapitated, of *Citoyen Prince*, Louis d'Orléans, in whose vast gallery of shops Charlotte de Corday had bought the 40-sous knife.

\* \* \* \* \*

The news reached Caen; Madame de Bretteville's house was besieged by an angry crowd; Leclerc hid the silver plate in the back of Lunel's shop where Madame de Bretteville cowered, hidden, while her empty apartment was searched; the news reached Argentan and the poor dwelling of M. de Corday. "She acted contrary to her nature!" he exclaimed, and fainted; exile awaited him and Eléonore; he left Normandy for Spain, where he died, refusing to discuss Charlotte's act. "What can I say? I do not recognise my daughter."

Her friends, the ex-nuns, Mlle. Forbin, Madame de Pontécoulant, refused to mention her name—to them she was a murderess and damned.

The news reached Charles Barbaroux, in full flight



with his friends under the protection of the regiment of ———, reached Pétion, to whom she had said: "Citizen, one day you will know me."

Barbaroux, hearing that he was accused of being her accomplice, declared: "If she had consulted me, and if it had been possible to advise on such an act, it would not have been to Marat's heart I should have shown the way."

Jean-Baptiste Salle thought at once of writing a tragedy on the heroine. The news reached Mesnil-Imbert, where the faithful Marjotte risked her life to preserve that of her master, M. de Corday de Cauvigny, who still lived in the moated *château* where his grandchild had passed so many happy hours; the simple servant, the proud old man, wept together the loss of the beloved. "She was so gay! *une gaîté folle*, one had to leave everything to play with her!"

The news reached Louis-Gustave Doulcet, Comte de Pontécoulant, who had been four days away from Paris, and overwhelmed him with horror; he had never received her letter asking him to be her advocate; by some unaccountable mischance it had not been delivered before he left the capital; he was a bold, honourable man, this hideous accident had caused one more pang to Charlotte de Corday, an endless grief to him. He could never forget that she had accused him of cowardice, believed herself forsaken by him; he wrote at once to the papers, declaring that if he had known that Mlle. de Corday had done him the honour to select him as her advocate he would have hastened to her side—he was her friend, her fellow-citizen, a Norman, of the same caste.

The news reached Klopstock in his study; to him

the Norman maiden was a heroine, he had her portrait painted, surrounded by laurels; he composed verses in her honour; she was not a murderess, but a sublime creature, her judges were covered with infamy, but her story would be told with admiration by future generations. Knobel also wrote of the French heroine as the angel of liberty sent by God to slay the atrocious Marat. Kerner cried, in a transport when he read of the deed of Charlotte de Corday in the papers: "She has outstripped us all!"

The news reached Madame Roland, herself so fervent a pupil of Plutarch and J. J. Rousseau, six weeks a prisoner and soon to be sent to the obscure and infected cell in the *abbaye* where Charlotte de Corday had passed two nights.

"She was a heroine worthy of a better time," exclaimed the lover of Buzot; then, when she heard of the enthusiasm shown at the Marat festivals—"I do not wish to leave this place except to die."

\* \* \* \* \*

But on no one did this act, this personality, make the impression that it did on Adam Lux; he was wholly consecrated to her memory. Forster took from him the sheets of his eulogy and read them with much misgiving. In stiff, poor French, with a Teutonic turn, the young German declared the Norman virgin sublime, incomparable, superior to anything that Rome or Sparta ever produced—"greater than Brutus, greater than Cato. . . . She was a celestial being for whom the earth was not fit, she passed like a flash of lightning, but she left her memory."

Lux declared that he loved better than ever the

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

France for which she had died, that he hated more than ever the tyranny she had braved. Careless of death, he defied again the *Montagnards*; he asked them to send him to the scaffold that her blood had sanctified as an altar, to strike off his severed head as hers had been struck off—"It will be another tigerish spectacle for your cannibal populace."

Forster reasoned with him to suppress his feelings; his death would benefit no one; good might yet come from the Revolution, the worst might be over, to wait quietly was the only prudent course—his friend was past all such arguments; he signed his brochure "Adam Lux, deputy-extraordinary of Mayence," and took it to the printer.

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There are some experiences, at once sublime and terrible, that the sensitive soul will not endure and live; there are some spectacles, at once grand and pitiful, that are intolerable; the enthusiastic agony can be assuaged only by death. There are some heights reached by human emotion from which there can be no descent; on this peak there must be an end of mortality and what is immortal must dissolve into eternity.

Several people had destroyed themselves during these hideous events in France, not from fear or hysteria, but from a disdain to live helpless amid anarchy.

This feeling had animated Adam Lux when he had decided to shoot himself before the Convention; to it was now added another, even more powerful, a mingled admiration and pity for a noble delicate

woman, vainly sacrificed, whom he could not save or avenge.

The sentiment that animated Adam Lux was that which caused men to invent chivalry, which is a clumsy symbol for the inexpressible; for this stranger he felt all that yearning tenderness of masculinity over femininity which is neither love nor lust, but half compassion and half reverence. He was agonised by her suffering, humiliated by her courage—what, a world of men, and *this* allowed to happen to a woman!

He dwelt on all the pitiful details, her loneliness, her innocence, the long rude journey in the great heat, the coarse attentions of her inferiors, the rough lodgings, her solitude in Paris, without a friend, advice or comfort, her unshaken resolution, the fortitude with which she had overcome feminine weakness and timidity, the courage with which she had endured four days of moral and physical torture, fatigue and abandonment, still finding at the end the fortitude to endure the long progress to the scaffold, not only with ordinary decency, but with perfect tranquillity and majestic composure.

He read her letter to Charles Barbaroux, written when she knew she had only a few hours to live, and his heart was torn at her serenity, her gaiety, her dignity—nothing forced, no bravado or levity, no theatrical posing, no self-pity, only a gentle melancholy under the cool courage, the charming jest.

All her actions were marked by complete sanity—they were the results of the mature decisions of a strong mind; not hysteria nor weak-mindedness, not lunacy nor mania had inspired Charlotte de Corday.

Her guiding forces had been a noble moral indignation, an impulse of self-sacrifice, a disdain to live when tyranny ruled.

All this Adam Lux, himself so much of the same temper, completely understood; he had for her that complete sympathy that amounts to a passion. Peasant-born himself, he fully realised the fineness of this aristocrat, her delicacy, her courtesy, her exquisite refinement—as every detail of her life was revealed and mouthed over by the curious and the malicious, he saw it as pure as her prying enemies had found her body. Nothing marred that short life, no scandal, no dispute, no weakness, temper or foolishness; all her days had been dedicated to the things of the spirit, a gentle childhood, a meek maidenhood, a brilliant maturity, a sublime death—such a life to Adam Lux was a noble work of art, like a classic statue of flawless marble, a grand poem, a superb piece of music.

Her beauty moved him to a terrible tenderness. Even her enemies had praised her superb shoulders and bosom, her admirable hands and arms, the rich outline of her shape, the loveliness of her face—hers was a beauty no one could ignore, and he had seen her going to her death, her rain-drenched red robe clinging to her figure so that every curve was revealed, her blue eyes, at once proud and tender, searching the crowd with looks of compassion, her pose majestic despite the bound hands.

Adam Lux at this sight had felt emotions rise within him that he did not know he was capable of, emotions that he did not know were possible to humanity; with all the force of a passionate and noble nature he fell in

love, not with the woman, but with what she represented.

She had written to Charles Barbaroux—"tomorrow, speaking in the Roman fashion, I shall have lived"—and with her death she had taken on a new existence; from her mutilated body had sprung her legend, a superhuman creature, saint, martyr, heroine, an angel of vengeance armed by Divine wrath, lovely beyond the common loveliness of women—"For the Lord had given Judith a special beauty and fairness."

Her chastity added to her dignity; she had not been inspired by earthly love nor tainted by earthly lust, she had put aside even the most delicate homage, she had forgone marriage, children, all worldly comfort, safety and company—she was utterly alone; she had really forgone what masculine vanity thought no fair young woman could forgo. There was amazement as well as anger in the cry of her enemies: "*Elle était vierge!*"

To Adam Lux this completed her perfection—was it not always the virgin who was sacrificed? Iphigenia, Antigone, Jephthah's daughter—the young, the pure, the lovely, offering all the riches of the untasted future, as the plucked blossom offers all the beauty of the fruit.

Yet Adam Lux did not only see Charlotte de Corday under this angelic guise; he understood, he pitied, he yearned over the delicate human being. He dwelt on her tedious journey, the heat, the fatigue, the loneliness, the hundred horrors of unprotected travel to one bred so finely, used to a conventual life, the pitiful overcoming of modesty and timidity in her calls on Lauze Deperret, on Marat, the sacrifice represented by the powdered hair, the rose gauze scarf, the long

agony from the hour she struck Marat at half-past seven on July 13th to her own death, at about the same hour, on July 17th. He considered, in angry shame, her last day. She had been before the Tribunal at eight o'clock, she had sat there till half-past one without faltering, she had gone back to her cell to wait, in the company of strangers, for the death-cart; she had carried out meekly, even gaily, the death toilette, she had stood erect through the long journey to the scaffold, drenched by the storm, howled at by the mob, with none but her executioner for company—eight o'clock in the morning until the evening and no trace of fatigue or fear on this tender creature, whose weakness should have inspired respect, protection and chivalry.

Adam Lux demanded the right to share her fate; he could do nothing else—he had no means of paying her a tribute save by his pen and his life-blood.

When his pamphlet was printed he sent copies of it to the press and everywhere else where he thought it would attract attention to himself and his stern demand to die.

Forster wrote: "Charlotte Corday has turned the head of this fine young man, and he sees now no other happiness save that of dying for her and for the *Gironde*, the only party which, according to him, has any right on its side. He is so deeply affected, so profoundly dominated by his sentiments, that for the past week he has only eaten about a quarter of a pound of bread a day."

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Most of the Parisian papers found the brochure so

daring that they suspected the odd Latin name Lux to be a *nom de guerre*. None took the challenge seriously; the *Courrier de l'Egalité* described the author as a maniac who had been electrified by the courage and fortitude of Charlotte Corday—and recommended him to take cold baths.

The government did not take the affair so lightly. Georges Kerner heard of the likely arrest of his friend and hastened to the *hôtel des Patriotes Hollandais* to entreat Adam Lux to fly from Paris. In refusing Adam Lux pressed Kerner to leave him and to spare him the agony of involving him in his fate.

His action had not been, he argued, that of a fanatic or a maniac; he had been most bitterly deceived and had unintentionally deceived others; he had vehemently persuaded his countrymen to join France, which had become an outpost of Hell—he owed his life as an expiation.

His home was ruined, his family separated from him by a waste of war, he was poor, helpless; the party on which he had placed his hopes, the Gironde, were defeated, in flight—what could anyone do but die?

The two young Germans mingled tears with their farewells—their hopes had been so high, their disappointment so cruel; there was only one consolation left, that they might be among the vanguard that must perish in the first shock of battle, and that those coming after them might pass over their dead bodies to liberty.

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On July 24th, in the morning, the police entered the *hôtel des Patriotes Hollandais*, arrested Adam Lux and seized his papers, which consisted of several copies of his two pamphlets, the drafts of his letters to Pétion and Guadet and the address he had intended to read before destroying himself in front of the Convention.

The same day he was brought before the Committee of General Safety.

"Why did you make this insensate project to destroy yourself?"

"The project was not insensate. A man's death may be of more benefit than his life—however, there is a language of heroism that it is useless to use to those who do not even know the grammar."

"Why did you reveal your design to Guadet and Pétion?"

"I did not wish to be taken for a madman or one in despair. I wanted it known that my suicide was undertaken in cold blood."

"But why did you think that Guadet and Pétion would encourage you? Did they not find it atrocious and did you not falter in your resolution?"

"I did not falter and patriotism often takes the air of an atrocity."

"Some people take all manner of means to attract attention to themselves and to secure employment. Have you solicited any place since your arrival in France?"

"No."

"Have you solicited your travelling expenses?"

"No."

The Committee was baffled and referred Adam Lux

to the Revolutionary Tribunal. He was sent to the prison of La Force to await this second trial and there forgotten, together with a number of notable men who expected from day to day either to be dragged to the guillotine or to be *septembrisés*, as the cant phrase, dating from the massacres in the prisons of September, 1790, went.

Among these prisoners were several members of the *Gironde*, including Pierre-Victorin Vergniaud, Valazé, Miranda, the brilliant, austere Spanish soldier, Montané, arrested for favouring Charlotte de Corday when he had presided at her trial, and Champagneux, who had been under Roland at the Ministry of the Interior and was the intimate friend of this unhappy man, then in hiding.

These men, against whom nothing was alleged save their political principles, were not kept with much strictness. They were allowed books, writing materials, one another's company, and the liberty to walk under the trees of the courtyard; they lived, however, in constant apprehension of a horrible death and endured the mental torture of inactivity while their country was in a state of anarchy, their goods confiscated, their families in hiding, want or danger.

None of these things could break their spirits; all of them could have said with Madame Roland in the *abbaye*: "I would rather perish here than owe my liberty to Prussian or Austrian invaders."

This ferocious sentiment of patriotism for the country that had already destroyed what they held dearer than life, and which, any moment, might take life itself, inspired these men with a cheerful fortitude which was fully shared by Adam Lux. Only, while

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

they dared to hope to be returned to life, he was impatient for death.

*Le Batave*, the Dutch paper published in Paris for the refugees from Holland, thus commented on the arrest of the young deputy from Mayence: "His spirit seems to have been carried to the last degree of exaltation from the instant that Charlotte Corday perished on the scaffold. He sees death under the most smiling colours; he hopes to die for his heroine."

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While Adam Lux waited in La Force, the *Maratistes* proceeded to the formal apotheosis of their hero, the cult of the friend of the people. Hundreds of prints showing the formidable and brutal features of Marat poured from the Press, while his portrait appeared on tie-pins, fans, book-markers, amulets of all kinds, hanging on the breasts of men and round the necks of women, in the midst of public trophies and on the wrists of children. There were representations of the murder under every possible form, from a life-size waxwork shown in the *Palais Egalité* to a small model attached to a calendar of the new months of the Republic. Statues of the Virgin were taken down in the streets and replaced by those of Marat, shops took as their trade name "*Au Grand Marat*," three French theatres showed, or had in preparation, dramas on this subject; there were hymns, poems, songs in honour of Charlotte de Corday's victim; in the *ci-devant* Chapel at Versailles and the great mansion of the Condés in Paris, the *ci-devant* Palais-Bourbon, a musical *scena*, "The Apotheosis of Lepelletier and Marat," was given.

The mania spread to the Provinces; not only streets and houses, but twenty towns added Marat to their names. Even the greedy vanity of the man whose life had been one effort to satisfy ambition would have been gorged could he have known of this posthumous fame. On August 19th *fêtes* were held in honour of Marat, to whom a granite column had already been raised at the expense of the *Jacobins, les vrais sans-culottes*, and to whom it was proposed to erect an obelisk in the *Place de la Réunion (Place du Carrousel)*.

On this August day all the deputies of the *Convention*, the *Commune*, all the members of the clubs and societies, turned out, willy-nilly, to do honour to Marat. Four citizens carried a litter on which was the filthy old bath in which Marat had died, another four supported in the same manner his dirty chair, desk, pen, paper and ink, a third group held aloft his bust. The flags, standards and scarves of the tricolour accounted for hundreds of yards of bunting; a touch of horror was given to this bizarre display by the sanguinary oratory of Roussillon: "Citizens, we do not demand laurels for Marat, but blood. Swear to avenge his death in the blood of his enemies."

A battalion of Amazons sent a fiery message to the *Jacobins*: "And we, we also will rise in a body, and we also will find the courage to face the dangers of war—we also are patriotic and weep at the death of Marat."

When the pompous monument in the *Place de la Réunion* was completed it consisted of two tombs behind a grille in a *pyramide gothique*; this monstrosity contained in the interior the famous bath

and other personal relics of Marat, which, lit by a lamp, could be seen through the grille; the other cenotaph was in honour of the Pole Lazouski, whose life and death had pleased the people; a sentinel kept guard over this grotesque monument, and this honour was continued until one of the ragged, starving guards perished of cold.

In the revolutionary calendar Marat took his place as Saint Marat, one of the corridors in the *Invalides* was named *corridor de Marat*, Montmartre became Montmarat, patriots registered their children as Brutus-Marat, Marat-Brutus and Marat la Montange; Marat's bust was placed beside that of Brutus in the Assembly.

David worked hard at his *Death of Marat*, which was to hang with the companion piece, *The Death of Lepelletier*, who had been murdered for voting the death of the King, in the chamber used by the Convention. The painter achieved more success with his effort at realism than he had ever attained in his frigid classical compositions. This sombre subject, with its dreadful fascination, with the vivid beauty of the assassin and the dark face and terrible appearance of the victim, with its sordid background, was suited to the gloomy brush of David, his hard, stiff technique; under his treatment this unique scene lost nothing of its horror. By order of the government the painting was to be engraved and a thousand copies distributed about the country. David had been promised 24,000 *livres* for his labour, which was to include the cost of the engraving, but he never received more than 12,000, so that the engraving was abandoned, as was also, for the same financial reason, a project to have Marat's

death taken as the subject for a tapestry to be made at the *Gobelins*.

Meanwhile the preparations for the *panthéonisation* of Marat went forward and Adam Lux waited in La Force for permission to die for Charlotte de Corday.

\* \* \* \* \*

This same month of August saw other activities on the part of the government of June 2nd; the *Federalists* (united departments) divided, without a central authority, without capable leaders, disheartened, bewildered, often apathetic, refusing to make common cause with the Royalists or the invaders, were easily dispersed or defeated by the energy of the government and suffered terrible reprisals for their defiance of Paris.

The foreign enemy was not to be so lightly affronted; the men, Robespierre, Danton, Couthon, Desmoulins, who exploited the delirium of the mob against their opponents under the rule of *il faut guillotiner ou s'attendre à l'être*, undertook the titanic task of leading this country, devouring her own entrails, against a Europe in arms—not against France, but against the French Revolution.

The *Mountain* had its heroism, its grand words, the strength of its own fury: "The Kings of Europe," cried Danton, this giant with the mask of a Miltonic Satan, "advance on France! France as gage of battle throws at them the head of a King!"

The defiance was sincere; the *Mountain* was as savagely patriotic as the *Gironde*. By the end of August the insurrection in the Provinces was crushed, save for the two towns of Toulon and Lyons, the first

of which had admitted the English as allies, the second of which resisted desperately the attempt of the Assembly to wipe her off the map of France.

The government worked like Titans of energy in their dens; the members of the Committee of Ten laboured in the Pavilion of Flora day and night, throwing themselves on mattresses for a few hours' rest, solid in their energy, their implacable force, their resolve to fashion a great nation out of the blood and fire of the revolution; other committees took up the work, efficiently, vigorously, without pause or pity.

These men were in all the opposite of the *Girondists*; they acted instead of talking, they did not hesitate, were not squeamish or nice, did not despair because they saw anarchy around them, they were hard, cruel, coarse, unscrupulous. Where the *Gironde*, a band of idealists without a co-ordinated policy, had failed, these men, one in spirit, inured with tireless energy and resolve, succeeded.

They had their answer ready for advancing Europe: "Until the moment that the enemy is chased from our territory, every Frenchman will be under arms—the young men to carry weapons, the married men to forge them, the women to make tents, the children to cut bandages, the old men to incite the people with speeches of hatred against Kings and in praise of the unity of the Republic, the levy will be general—the citizens from eighteen to twenty-five will march first . . . the banners will carry this device: '*Le peuple français debout contre les tyrans!*' "

These words flung at the Assembly on August 23rd by Bertrand Barère would not have been disdained by Charlotte de Corday.

By a decree of that day 200,000 men were to be raised. The first to go were the boys—"these children, rushed by thousands to the frontiers, will make Europe tremble."

Lazare Carnot, brave, implacable, cool, one of the greatest soldiers of any age, organised this fury of resistance, brought down to realities this national enthusiasm; Commander-in-Chief of these ragged hordes, he patiently organised the arming, clothing, feeding of thousands of peasants, shopkeepers, clerks, schoolboys, ruffians and adventurers; the Revolution had found a great man of action.

The property of the *émigrés* was realised to pay for these ardent, raw forces; powder was manufactured by the ton, Chappe came forward with his new invention of the telegraph, shirts and shoes were taken from the civil population; officers arose, Hoche, Jourdan, Moreau, noble instructions were given to the famished troops—"Only by long labours, by privations, by fatigues and sufferings can you purchase the honour to fight and die for your country."

Charlotte de Corday might have allowed some antique virtue to these rude patriots; she might have found among them—these grim, badly armed, half-fed, unpaid medley of men who rushed to the menaced frontiers, some heroes as worthy of praise as Buzot, Barbaroux, or any of the noble ineffectual spirits of the *Gironde*.

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While France thus with superhuman efforts put her half-million men into the field, she did not relax her furies against those whom she considered traitors; the



whole country was an armed camp, the jails were full, the guillotine never lacked victims; side by side, heroism, baseness. While the bold energy of Carnot organised the defence of France, while the fiery courage of Danton and Barère urged the nation to sacrifice, the elegant hand of Hébert traced obscene libels against the *Gironde* and filthy attacks on Madame Roland, which were shouted beneath her prison window, and the fugitive deputies from Caen were hunted down like wild beasts from one hiding-place to another. Talent, virtue, integrity, innocence, courage, were daily destroyed in the persons of men and women of every age and class.

Under the yellowing trees of the prison courtyard Adam Lux walked day after day with Champagneux; like Madame Roland he consoled himself by reading Plutarch, like Charlotte de Corday he gave himself enthusiastically to the doctrines of Rousseau. He discussed the philosopher with Champagneux, who related how Rousseau's friend, Hérault de Séchelles—who had been President of the *Convention* on the days of the downfall of the *Gironde*—had been about to give him the manuscript of *Emile* when he had been arrested.

Lux marvelled that the friend of Rousseau could be the friend of Robespierre.

"Hérault is noble and rich," said Champagneux, "and these two crimes can now only be expiated by other crimes. These days one must be executioner or victim."

The shrewd, cultured Frenchman observed the young German with compassion and admiration, and considered that he had "the candour, the purity of a

man who has always lived in the midst of forests, all the private and public virtues, with an unshakable firmness and vigour of soul."

The Terror advanced. By the end of August Lux learned of the execution of Adam-Philippe, Comte de Custine, who, triumphant in Mayence, had accepted his allegiance in the name of the French Republic

Shortly afterwards Lux was brought before Sullier and Fouquier-Tinville; he repeated his tale of his scheme of a suicide to reconcile all parties, and to show the courage of "an impartial republican." He was asked his opinion of the *Girondists* who were his fellow-prisoners. Lux gave them warm praise and repeated his defiance of anarchy; he was returned to prison and his fate was not in doubt.

The young German was not without friends. Forster had found employment under the government and had left Paris, but Georges Kerner frequently visited him in prison, and a former professor at the University of Mayence, Wedekind, who had received an appointment as *médecin-en-chef des armées de la République*, made a determined attempt to save his fellow-citizen, whom he had known in the *Convention rhénane*. This compassionate doctor sent a letter to *Le Journal de la Montagne*, which was published on September 4th; this tactful appeal termed the *Girondists* "*monstres*" and tried to show Lux as their mere tool.

Striving by every means to arouse pity, the letter painted the ruined home, the broken fortunes of Lux, his intense studies, his melancholy dispositions, his love for his far distant wife, his enforced chastity owing to his marital fidelity—all these causes, said the

letter, had driven Adam Lux absolutely mad. And the climax of his lunacy came with the sight of the beauty of Charlotte de Corday, which he had desired with a frenzied obsession ever since.

Should he be punished for lunacy?

Would it not be better to send him to a hospital or to America? No doubt his disease would soon be cured with a cottage, some land and a pretty companion, where he would soon learn to put the right value on "the disorders and the violent shocks of passion that accompany a great revolution."

On the day this article appeared, Lux, impatient of the delay in his case, wrote to the Public Prosecutor denouncing himself; he used a feigned hand and a feigned name, Moschenberg.

"What, he still lives, this bold man who called Marat a monster, who said that Charlotte Corday was greater than Brutus, that her judges were executioners?"

No notice being taken of this letter, he wrote again under his own name, demanding to be brought to trial; on September 20th he wrote again—"I have been in prison two months—cannot my case be dealt with?"

By chance he obtained a copy of the paper with Wedekind's letter; it threw him, who usually showed such a stoic courage, into a state of the liveliest emotion; he was deeply wounded at being represented as a madman. Kerner, coming to visit him, found him pacing up and down the courtyard, the offending paper in his grip.

His friends tried to persuade him to accept the generous hand held out, to use this stratagem to save

himself—"until better times," urged Kerner.

Montané, Vergniaud, Miranda, all of whom felt a warm affection for the German so cruelly trapped by his naïve enthusiasm for France, begged him not to throw away his life.

But Adam Lux wrote to the editor of *Le Journal de la Montagne*, sternly denying his own insanity or the intrigues of the *Gironde*—what he had done had been done coolly, in full possession of his senses, and he wished, without excuses, to take the full consequences.

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About the date that a dry denial of the plea put forward in Wedekind's letter appeared in the same paper—"Adam Lux pretends not to be insane"—the final triumph of Marat took place, the Assembly voted the decrees that made him immortal; though it was the last days of September, 1794, before Paris saw the translation of his mortal remains from the garden of the *Cordeliers* to the *Panthéon—ci-devant* church of *Sainte Geneviève de Paris*. This ceremony took place amid the acclamations of the mob; the funeral proceeded with great pomp to the ancient church, then changed into a Temple, or *Panthéon*, after the classic taste of the Revolution. The original Pantheon, built by Agrippa in Rome, had been at this period long converted into a Christian church, so does man juggle with terms in his manifold superstitions.

The friend of the people was thus left in the company of all the gods, while the *impurs restes* of Mirabeau were at the same time cast out of the sacred temple.

The ceremony was not without dignity; choir-boys

sang music composed by Etienne-Nicolas Méhul, the young Belgian who had been Gluck's pupil, and who was forced to bend his talent to the trend of the times.

The impartiality of the artist was also shown by Luigi Maria Cherubini, afterwards patronised by the restored Bourbons, who wrote the music to the words of a chorus written by Marie-Joseph de Chénier, younger brother of the poet, André, who had praised Charlotte de Corday in noble verse. This chorus celebrated the glory of the martyrs and defenders of Liberty. To these strains and to the sound of the eulogy pronounced by the President of the Convention, the body of Marat was lowered into the vault; he was now, his followers believed, assured of immortality and at rest for ever in the temple of fame, over which all the gods watched.

Adoration could go no further, the apotheosis of Marat was complete, Albertine, his sister, and Simonne Evrard embraced each other with tears of joy, believing that they had really been in the service of a divine being.

\* \* \* \*

September, 1793, while Marat was being raised by the vote of the *Mountain* to the highest honour the mind of man can conceive, some others who had believed themselves apostles of liberty, who were also disciples of J. J. Rousseau, republicans and friends of the people, were being harried from covert to covert, like hunted vermin. The *Girondists* who had fled to Caen, where Charlotte de Corday had listened to their enthusiastic eloquence, had been proscribed. On the 4th of September (date of Wedekind's letter in favour

of Adam Lux) there had been a riot of starving people in Paris; the *Gironde* had been accused of offering the Parisians classic phrases instead of bread, the Mountain offered them (as Madame Roland had predicted) corpses instead of loaves, and this pleased better. This time it was the heads of the members of the *Gironde* that were offered; the refugees were denounced and pursued. These unhappy, brave, honest, high-minded people found themselves reduced to the most miserable straits.

After falling back with the beaten troops of Normandy they separated into little groups; the men who had come most under the notice of Charlotte de Corday and Adam Lux chanced to keep together, Marguerite-Elie Guadet and Jérôme Pétion, who dissuaded the young German from suicide, Jean-Baptiste Louvet, the novelist with whom Mlle. de Corday had spoken in Caen, Charles Barbaroux, to whom she had written the letter that had inspired Adam Lux, fled together on September 20th to Gascony. Spied upon and pursued by the agents of the Committee of Public Safety, they hastened on from Bec d'Ambez, where they had been recognised, towards Saint Emilion, where Guadet's father had a property and where they hoped to find an asylum; while in Gascony they had been joined by Jean-Baptiste Salles, who, in furtive leisure, was writing his tragedy, "*Charlotte de Corday*," and Charles Valady.

On the 29th of September the inhabitants of Saint-Emilion saw seven men whom they took to be deserters, and whom no one would shelter, wandering the streets, destitute; they were the proscribed deputies thus described to the police on their heels—"seven

strangers, some very tall, wearing high-crowned hats with white caps beneath, brown coats with red facings, each having a swordstick and, under the arm, a canvas clothes-bag."

Leaving Saint-Emilion they made for the *château* of Guadet *père*, but learning that Tallien, one of the government commissioners, was at Réole, between them and their objective, they dispersed; their desperate objective was the Netherlands, whence they hoped to gain America.

Elie Guadet's sister-in-law, Madame Bouquey, with intrepid devotion, hurried from Paris to offer her country house as a place of refuge for the fugitives; here she sheltered Guadet, Salles, Louvet, Valady, and Barbaroux, then Buzot, the lofty-minded, romantic platonic lover of Madame Roland, and Jérôme Pétion. These men having been "hidden in seven different places in fifteen days, were reduced to the last extremities."

The heroic Madame Bouquey concealed them in a grotto thirty feet underground, at the bottom of a disused well full of decaying refuse and droppings of foul water. What Louvet termed the *angoisses affreuses* of this existence, "surrounded by pestiferous odours," was increased by a severe shortage of food; provisions were scarce and Madame Bouquey had the greatest difficulty in squeezing the bare necessities of life, haricots, bread, coarse meat, out of her housekeeping without rousing suspicions. Under these frightful circumstances, Louvet, Barbaroux, Buzot and Pétion tried to finish the *mémoires*, which should serve as their justification to posterity. Salles worked at his *Charlotte de Corday*; Buzot secretly re-read the

intrepid love letters smuggled to him from Madame Roland in prison; only the romantic Louvet was in his confidence. It was Louvet's Lodöiska (Madame Cholet, named from the heroine of Louvet's novel *Faublas* and the title of Cherubini's famous opera) who had been the intermediary, visiting Madame Roland in prison and forwarding the ardent vows of love and fidelity—there were but five of these letters, for it had not been easy to send them to the hunted man, and after he had left Caen the lovers had long ceased to be able to communicate one with the other. In the infected cell in the *abbaye* Madame Roland regarded Buzot's portrait, taken in the days of his elegance, and sternly considered suicide, in his filthy cave Buzot consoled himself by the memory of this ideal love.

These men, whatever their faults, errors or incapacities, were of perfect integrity and courage; they might, earlier in their flight from Paris, have joined the royalists in arms or the foreigners on the frontiers and secured safety and a chance of reprisals against their enemies, together with an opportunity of satisfying the ambitions and the passions common to the young and ardent.

These temptations they had put aside, they remained staunch republicans, true Frenchmen.

Nothing was left them but the sublime and bitter consolations Madame Roland had expressed so clearly:

*"C'est un phénomène sans exemple que la régénération d'un empire faite paisiblement; c'est probablement une chimère. L'adversité est l'école des nations comme celle de l'homme et je crois bien qu'il*



*faut être épuré par elle pour valoir quelque chose. En nous faisant naître à l'époque de la liberté naissante, le sort nous a placés comme les enfants perdus de l'armée qui doit combattre pour elle et la faire triompher; c'est à nous de bien faire notre tâche et de préparer ainsi le bonheur des générations suivantes."*

In the foul obscurity of their retreat which they occupied for the terrible month of October, 1793, these *enfants perdus* discussed Charlotte de Corday, the fair young gentlewoman who had visited them with her precise escort at Caen, who had watched the scanty groups of volunteers enrolling under the banners of Wimpfen.

"I was moved to see them," she had written to Barbaroux. "I thought so many need not be sacrificed—the hand of a woman without consequence should be, I thought, sufficient."

They discussed her words, her beauty, her tranquillity—"the time will come when you will know me, Citizen Pétion."

They knew her now; as Salles read over his play, Barbaroux said: "Why do you not make Adam Lux one of your characters, he is truly enamoured of her——"

Crouching in the infected twilight of the foul hiding-place, Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Coudray, who, before the Revolution, had been a successful novelist and had enjoyed, in his own words, "all that can render a sensible man happy," scribbled his desperate *Mémoires* on odd scraps of paper, dating them "*Les Grottes de Saint-Emilion, dans la Gironde.*"

Louvet, fair, blue-eyed, and of such delicacy of make and fineness of features that he could easily disguise

himself as a woman, full of sensibility and emotionalism, was possessed of an undaunted courage and an unblemished enthusiasm that was fired by the character of Mlle. de Corday. His misery was heightened by his separation from Lodöiska, whom he had deeply loved from infancy, whom he knew to be faithful, devoted and in agony as to his fate. This love illuminated the foul wretchedness of the Saint-Emilion grottoes for Louvet as the love of Madame Roland illuminated them for Buzot; this manner of happiness was denied the dissolute Charles Barbaroux.

"I have seen you," wrote Louvet of his friend, "surrounded by the thousand enchantresses your beauty has attracted; envy me my one pure love."

Under these frightful circumstances, under apprehension of instant death, suffering, half-starved, forlorn, animated by a love and a patriotism that amounted to an exaltation, Louvet wrote his panegyric of Charlotte de Corday.

"Some time after our arrival at Caen, while we were at the *hôtel de l'Intendance* where we all lodged, a young person presented herself, saying she wished to see Barbaroux. She was tall, well made, with a candid air and a modest bearing; there was in her face, which was both beautiful and charming, and in all her movements, a mingled sweetness and pride that announced a celestial soul. She came always accompanied by her servant and waited in the *salon*, where any one of us might pass at any moment. Since this young girl has fixed on herself the regards of the universe, we have naturally recalled all the circumstances of her visits, for which it is clear now that the help she asked for a relative [*sic*] was only a pretence. Her true reason

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

was, without doubt, to make the acquaintance of some of the founders of this Republic for which she meant to sacrifice herself; and perhaps she was pleased to think that one day they would recall her countenance to their memories. It shall never be effaced from mine, O Charlotte Corday! In vain the libellous *Gordeliers* conspire to traduce thy charms in words and with the pencil, thou wilt always appear before our eyes superb and gentle, modest and beautiful, as thou wert, with thy bearing, full of dignified assurance, thy glance of fire tempered by sweetness, this fire that shone so brilliantly the day of thy last visit to us, just before thy departure to destroy this man whose hideous deformity even his idolators cannot render less loathsome. I here declare that she told none of us of her design. If such actions could be advised and if she had asked our advice, is it Marat we should have told her to strike? Did we not know him to be so devoured by a cruel disease that he had only a few days to live? . . .

"Few have noticed, in the late tumults, what sublimity there was in the proud brevity of her replies to the ruffians who judged her; how magnificent, too, in thought and expression is the immortal letter she addressed, a few hours before her death, to Barbaroux, and which she headed, with the delicacy only a great soul could know—"from the chamber of Brissot."

"If everything else worthy in the French Revolution perishes, this letter will survive the centuries.

"O my dear Barbaroux, in all thy destiny, which contains so much any man might desire, I have only envied thee this—that thy name was attached to this letter! Ah, at least, when she was questioned, she

mentioned mine! I have then received the reward of all my labours, my sacrifices, my pains, the torments that I endure in thy absence, O Lodöiska! Even if the last ill befalls and my ferocious persecutors assassinate thee, Lodöiska—yes, arrive what will, I have received my recompense: Charlotte Corday has named me! I am then sure of immortality!

“Charlotte Corday, thou who wilt ever be the idol of the Republicans, in the Elysium where thy repose is shared by Vergniaud, Sidney and Brutus, hear my last vows! Beg of the Eternal Being that He will spare my wife, that He will protect her, that He will return her to me, that He will grant us some corner of the earth where, in honourable poverty, I can labour for her—hidden from our enemies—grant us a few years of happiness and love! And if this prayer be not granted, if my Lodöiska must mount the scaffold, may I soon learn it so that I can follow her to the sphere where thou reignest to meet my wife once more and behold thee again!”

When the exhausted, wretched man read over this paragraph again, he saw how it might impress others—as the delirium of fanaticism; but he refused to abandon his sole possession, his enthusiasm, and, taking up his pen again wrote:

“I have read again the above sentences and I do not disguise from myself that many people will say they express fanaticism. Fanaticism be it, then; it is not cold men who do great things—he was also a fanatic, the young man—ah, I regret that I do not know his name! who when he saw the beautiful Corday enter prison, offered to take her place and suffer her punishment. I need not add that the

*Cordeliers* granted only half his request; they did not long allow him to survive the woman for whom he would have died."

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In La Force Adam Lux waited, tranquil in the autumn sunshine, the October winds stripping the trees, casting the leaves at his feet as he paced with his Rousseau and his Plutarch, detached from the world.

The atrocious tortures of the Queen of France were drawing to a close; Hébert, whose base venom had been exercised on Charlotte de Corday and Madame Roland, slandered the daughter of the Cæsars with insinuations so vile that even that tribunal recoiled; in the middle of the month Adam Lux learned that the Austrian Queen had, with every circumstance of horror, and with imperial fortitude, bowed beneath the knife that had slain Charlotte de Corday.

Preparations were made for the trial of the twenty-two *Girondists* who since June had been in prison. Adam Lux hoped that he might be tried with them; Jean-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *le roi Brissot*, who in '89 had seemed such a fiery revolutionary, who had been for long the leader of the *Gironde*, so that members of the Right had been named *Brissotins*, had fled to Chartres, his seat, but had been captured and was to share the fate of his colleagues; he had been the object of the special hatred of the *Mountain* and the special focus for the obscene furies of *Père Duchêne*.

Adam Lux and Madame Roland were moved at the same time to the *Conciergerie*, which had sheltered

the last days of Mlle. de Corday, and the young German found an opportunity to pass to the woman whom he so admired a letter from Champagneux still in La Force.

He exchanged a few words with Madame Roland, who, in her reply to Champagneux, described him as "an excellent man"; he, on his side, paid tribute to this Cornelia, this Roman matron, whose beauty, courage and spirit were worthy of an antique heroine.

Neither Adam Lux, who had been their close companion in prison, nor Roland's wife, was called as a witness at the trial of the doomed Girondists; events pressed one on the other with hideous rapidity—"years in twenty-four hours," Madame Roland had said. The Terror flowed over France, which was no other than "a field of carnage where the populace devoured one another." Collot d'Herbois, Fouché and Couthon carried fire and sword into the provinces, at Caen, at Marseilles, at Bordeaux, the guillotine was set up; there was haste, even to die; the millionaire renegade Bourbon, Louis d'Orléans, condemned to the knife, begged that he might suffer before evening; the flatterer of Marat was flung into the ditch beside Charlotte de Corday.

On October 31st the twenty-two appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal: Brissot de Warville, Pierre Vergniaud, Armand Gensonné, Fonfrède, Ducos, Charles-Eléonore Valadé, who had sworn not to die by the hands of an underling, La Source, the Marquis de Sillery, husband of that passionate disciple of Rousseau, who, as Madame de Genlis, had been the mistress of Orléans, Gardien, Carra, Lauze Deperret, compromised by his relations with Charlotte

de Corday and Madame Roland, Duprat, the poor enthusiastic priest Fauchet, whom Charlotte de Corday "despised," Beauvais, Duchâtel, Mainvielle, Lacaze, Boileau, Lehardy, Antiboul and Vigée.

Sixty-three deputies, belonging to the Right and the *Marais*, protested against the judgment of these innocent men; they were themselves arrested.

With a proud and stoic bearing the doomed deputies faced the tribunal, the quaker-like Brissot, worn, haggard, but calm, in a threadbare black coat that hardly covered him, came last but one. He had always led a Spartan life, of poverty and hard work, and had no fault but enthusiasm for abstract ideals and harshness in judging the faults of others.

The golden voice of Pierre Vergniaud was raised for the last time in public; it was soon silenced; La Source flung out at his judges as he was hustled out—"I lose my head when the country has gone mad, you will lose yours when she recovers her reason."

Pierre Vergniaud, with his lazy grand manner, stood elegantly at ease as the death sentence was being read, when he felt Valazé lean against him, and said:

"What, are you afraid?"

"No, I am dying." Valazé had concealed a knife among his papers and struck himself.

With a last cry of defiance—"Vive la République"—the ex-deputies were hurried out; Fauchet returned to the Church, the others died with dignity and fortitude in that "philosophy" in which they had lived. Valazé's dead body was put in the cart with the others and, like them, cast under the knife of the guillotine; he much resembled Adam Lux

"*Allons au pied du grand autel!*" yelled a Jacobin

in the Convention, "*voir célébrer la messe rouge!*"

Girey-Dupré, the young journalist who had worked for Brissot and who had followed the fugitives to Caen, and whose gaiety had helped the sufferings of the wandering fugitives, rushed before the Tribunal, and declared that the murdered men were the equals of Aristides and Algernon Sidney, then was dragged, singing the hymn of his own composition, to his death. Many of the enthusiasts, including Louvet, wrote death songs, in readiness for their executions.

In their miserable retreat the news of the sacrifice of the *Gironde* came to the fugitives lurking under the protection of Madame Bouquey.

Disdaining to compromise any further their generous friend, they left their filthy hiding-place and separated. Louvet for Paris to find Lodöiska, even if he found death, Valady for Périgueux, where he was discovered and executed, Guadet and Salles to Montpont; finally, after prolonged miseries, they were arrested, sent to Bordeaux and guillotined.

Barbaroux, Buzot and Pétion wandered uncertainly, vaguely, towards the sea; in rags, haggard, filthy, bearded, these three men, the handsome Provençal, with the Greek outline, the Roman look, the charming and sensitive Buzot, Jérôme Pétion, the orator who had been the "Messiah" of Paris, appeared like scarecrows, degraded as the most miserable beggars. They had one more misery to endure; as they crept from one hiding-place to another, they learned, by casual gossip, of the death of Madame Roland, news which threw Buzot into an agony that nearly cost him his reason.

\* \* \* \*



Madame Roland, in a white gown scattered with roses, went with triumphant majesty to her death, proud without arrogance, tranquil without bravado; she had generously refused the advocacy of Claude-François Chauveau-Lagarde, who had defended Charlotte de Corday and the Queen, and died in disdain of her judges. She was compared to that other fair victim—the beautiful matron, warm and tender, the lovely virgin, cold and chaste—they seemed, with delicate features and blond locks, like sisters.

“It is the second edition of Charlotte de Corday,” remarked the press, furious at the fortitude of these two women. “Where do these wretches find their courage?”

In the *Conciergerie* Adam Lux still lingered, imploring death in vain; a poor hairdresser, Troquart, formerly employed by the family of Guadet, sheltered Barbaroux, Buzot and Pétion in his humble house at Saint-Emilion; Guadet and Salles had been discovered with Guadet *père*; they were sent to the guillotine at Bordeaux, together with Guadet *père*, his wife, Saint-Brice Guadet, Madame Bouquoy and her husband.

In a terrible letter the third brother, an officer of distinction, sent the news to Louvet, who had contrived to reach Paris and was in hiding with his faithful wife.

*“Citizen, you asked me for some details of the deputies who were with you in the grottoes of Saint-Emilion, I can only imperfectly satisfy your sad impatience. I was, far from all these events, at Sainte-Dominique, where I was fighting the enemies of the Republic. After my return to France I have been in*

*that unhappy country (the Gironde) where I have learned that not one of them has escaped the assassins. My brother (Elie Guadet, the deputy) and Salles, were found, after much searching, in my father's house. They were taken to Bordeaux, where they perished with all my family. Pétion, Buzot and Barbaroux were hidden in a house (Troquart's in Saint-Emilion). The house-to-house visits being made by the police, forced them to fly; they gained the suburbs of Castillon, where they were pursued. They made a frugal repast, which was their last. Barbaroux, believing it impossible to escape, tried to blow out his brains; Pétion and Buzot tried to turn the ball which wounded him severely. Several people, attracted by the shot, came up and recognised him; he was taken to Castillon, then to Bordeaux, where he finished his existence. Soon after, Buzot and Pétion, reduced to the last extremities, destroyed themselves sooner than fall into the hands of these monsters avid for their blood. All those who gave them an asylum at Saint-Emilion have perished; they even took to the scaffold everyone who chanced to be in my father's house when the refugees were found there.*

*The citizeness Bouquet [sic], her husband, her unhappy father, have all been sacrificed. Nothing but ashes can now be found of those estimable families who were proud to furnish the first defenders of the Republic. They have slain my two brothers, one of whom had contributed to our victories on the Rhine, and the other of whom by his eloquence, his wisdom, his energy, prepared, founded the Republic, and by his virtues supported it. They have slain my father and my mother, at the age of seventy years, who were guilty*

*of nothing but of sheltering their innocent son, who would have been the prop and honour of their old age. Of all my family, I alone remain. The memoirs of Barbaroux, Pétion and Buzot have been taken to the Military Commission, where, most likely, every care will be taken to see that they do not come to the light of day. But . . .*

*"Signed, Guadet,*  
*"Chef de Bataillon au 10<sup>e</sup> régiment. 21 Ventôse,*  
*III année républicaine."*

Some obscurity hangs over the fate of the three refugees and it is possible that Colonel Guadet was not accurately informed as to details of their miserable ends, of which only the following facts are known.

Hearing that there was to be a house-to-house search by the police in Saint-Emilion, the three ex-deputies left their shelter with Troquart, taking no provisions beyond a morsel each of bread and meat.

Stumbling across the fields of Médoc, they came upon a village fair where they believed themselves recognised.

They escaped into a pine wood, where Charles Barbaroux, who had kept his pistol, shot himself in the face. The wound was not mortal, he was seized and taken to Bordeaux, where that noble head that Madame Roland had found of an antique beauty, that had pleased Charlotte de Corday, and overawed the Tribunal, was shown mutilated, disfigured, severed from the body, to the jeering crowd in the market place.

Pétion and Buzot, starving, in despair, wandered across the fields, where their bodies, half devoured by

wolves, were found a few days after their flight from Saint-Emilion. They may have died of exposure, from suicide, or from an attack by wild animals.

When, for the last time, they had left the shelter of Madame Bouquey's house, they had enclosed their *Mémoires*, a few letters, and the play on Charlotte de Corday, in a metal box, which had been concealed in a ditch or cesspool.

The police who had arrested the Bouqueys had found this box, and seeing that the contents were of no political interest, handed them over to Marc-Antoine Jullien, a boy of nineteen, one of the fiercest lieutenants of Robespierre, who, Commissioner of Public Safety at Saint-Emilion, had nosed out and betrayed the fugitives.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days after the death of his wife, Roland stabbed himself to the heart on the public way. There was a void round Adam Lux; he was alone amid his enemies; on November 2nd he was formally accused by Fouquier-Tinville of having tried to foment civil war by his writings, of having suggested Roland as a Dictator, of having abused the Club of the *Jacobins*—"this palladium of the Republic"—and of having made "a pompous apology for Charlotte de Corday" and of having "mingled with this panegyric of the assassin of Marat a delirium of tenderness for this execrable monster and a desire to join her in the celestial spheres."

Adam Lux received this written accusation coolly.

"Here," he said to his fellow-prisoners, when it was delivered to him, "is my death-warrant—the repre-

sentative of a town that wished to give itself to France will be sent to the scaffold. At twenty-eight years of age I shall finish a miserable life—to-morrow or the day after I shall be cold as a stone. Tell those who may speak of me as worthy of death that it was not among Frenchmen that I ought to have met this end, which I face with contempt."

He said farewell to Kerner—"You have had experiences that should be useful to yourselves and others."

He had one sigh:

"That I might be buried close to Rousseau, at his feet!"

There was a letter to write; he had already recommended his unfortunate family to Jean Dumont; he now wrote to his wife, Sabine.

*"I die for Liberty and if Liberty triumphs the French nation will not forget the wife and children of Adam Lux. Console yourself, dear heart, what can man do against destiny? A chance accident might have killed me and Liberty would not have been served, as it is, at least I die with honour and this reflexion will certainly console you; you will weep my loss, but you will feel that it honours you. I cannot help you to educate our daughters, I leave them my sentiments, my life and my death, you will know how one day to make them value such a legacy. I give them my paternal benediction, it will not be lost on them. Dear Sabine, in a few days I shall be nearer to you than I have been these six months, for my spirit, delivered from its earthly body, will not delay to join you and our dear children and I shall see you, though you, with mortal eyes, will not see me. Very often I shall*

*descend from the dwellings of the immortal gods to visit you—what a joy to behold our dear daughters grow in wisdom and innocence until the time that we, after all these trials, shall be united again.”*

Adam Lux entrusted this letter and one to his old friend, Nicolas Vogt, to his jailers, who delivered them to the Tribunal. They were never sent to Germany, but thrown into the *dossier* of Adam Lux with this comment by the translator: “These letters reveal nothing but a head full of fantasy, a man ready to die and full of moral energy.”

\* \* \* \* \*

On November 4th Adam Lux appeared again before the Tribunal; he had said farewell to his fellow-prisoners and given his cloak to one of the poorest of these unfortunates.

Intrepid, tranquil and stately in his demeanour, the young German, neatly dressed in the summer clothes too light for this season, faced his judges, his heavy fair hair falling on his square shoulders, his bloodshot eyes steadfast.

Again he was asked by the Vice-President Dumas:

“Why did you wish to kill yourself?”

“To be free.”

“Did you have relations with Guadet and Pétion?”

“Yes.”

“How do you regard Roland?”

“As a virtuous man.”

“In this brochure, *Charlotte Corday*, you express your opinion that the assassin of Marat is greater than Brutus.”

"So I believe."

"You did not write it yourself, you are sheltering others."

"It is entirely my own work, I alone was responsible for printing it."

"Who was the printer?"

"I refuse to say. I will compromise no one."

Lescot-Fleuriat read the act of accusation, the prisoner's advocate, Guillot, said a few formal words in his defence.

He was condemned to death for offences against the sovereignty of the people.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded Dumas.

"I submit to your sentence."

The late autumn day was darkening down; lamps were being lit in the corridors of the *Palais de Justice* as Adam Lux was taken back to the prison to await the tumbril.

Kerner and Forster followed in the press, as Adam Lux had followed the cart that bore Charlotte de Corday to the same destination. At five o'clock the last twilight had faded; the guillotine was lit by the flare of torches, which cast a ragged light on the faces of the crowd who peered between the soldiers and the pikes to see who this was—this foreigner who was dying for Charlotte de Corday. A dun haze rose from the river, the air was piercing, but Adam Lux did not shiver as he mounted the narrow steps of the scaffold and saw the rigid outlines of the guillotine against the obscure sky.

"He goes up as if he mounted the tribunal to speak," said Kerner.

"He is throwing himself on death—he is run-

ning to it," said Forster.

Adam Lux was triumphant; his coolness was incredible to those who stood by; he would have embraced his executioners, but his hands were tied; he smiled at his friends, he glanced up at something above and beyond the fog and stench of Paris; he was cast on the plank. His fair head fell into the basket, and these three disciples of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the young gentlewoman from Normandy, the German student from the Rhine, the Sardinian quack from Geneva, had destroyed one another, like errant stars darting from their courses and meeting to annihilate one another's light then falling together in ashes.





## *EPILOGUE*

*Echoes*



## ALBERTINE MARAT

THE echoes were not still for twenty-five, for fifty years; brilliant and terrible as lightning, memories of these three, Marat, Lux, Charlotte de Corday, remained in the hearts of three old women.

Half a century after she had been called to Paris by the murder of her brother, Albertine Marat lived in an attic in the *rue de la Barillerie*, earning her living by making watch-hands and the finest jewellery. Gaunt, severe, of simple life and manners, with something formidable in her reserve, the old woman resided alone amid her relics of her brother, jealously and tenderly guarded. For over thirty years her companion had been Simonne Evrard, who called herself *la veuve Marat*; from their poor garret the two women could see the *Palais de Justice*, where Charlotte de Corday had faced her judges.

In 1824 Simonne died and Albertine Marat lived solitary, enclosed with her memories. She alone preserved the cult of Marat, which had once been like a frenzy in France; her miserable lodging was a shrine to his honour, her life of labour and poverty was barren of everything but devotion to a dead man.

Everyone else had forgotten Marat, or only remembered him with contempt or horror; an Empire, a Kingdom, had come and gone, but Albertine Marat, weary after her day's toil, still lit her candle and gazed at her precious treasures. The son of Philippe *Egalité* was on the throne of France, very few of those whom this old woman had known in 1793 survived; all

Marat's friends, supporters, toadies had perished; the guillotine had accounted for Danton, Robespierre, Desmoulins, Hébert, Couthon, Saint-Just, Fouquier-Tinville, Barère, and so many others whose names she could not even remember; she looked back on those days across years of war, of falling dynasties. Enemies were dead, as well as friends; André Chénier, who had sung Charlotte de Corday, had himself been beheaded; Louvet, sole survivor of the proscribed *Girondists*, had died a few years after the fall of Robespierre, of illness brought on by his perils and exposures.

Marat had been in the *Panthéon* only a year; in February, 1795, the Convention had decreed that no citizen should have immortal honours until he had been dead ten years; the following day, to the great agony of Simonne and Albertine, the busts of Marat and other patriots, the two pictures of David showing the death of Marat and Lepelletier, were removed from the chamber, leaving the bust of Brutus in solitary glory.

A Royalist journalist reprinted an extract from an early work by Marat, which showed him as a firm believer in monarchy; a pamphlet promptly appeared: *Les Crimes de J. P. Marat*. The grotesque monument with the bath was demolished; busts and statues of Marat were hurled from their places by the mob; in many cases the bust of Rousseau took the place of the friend of the people. In the court of the Jacobins Marat was burnt in effigy, and the ashes, stuffed into a chamber-pot, hurled into the sewers with cries of "*Voilà ton Panthéon, Marat!*"

Albertine and Simonne were without means; a *Maratiste* had given them a small income of fifty *livres*

yearly; for the rest they toiled with their hands. They could not afford to claim the body of their idol, now so cruelly overthrown; when it was taken out of the *Panthéon* it was buried, in a leaden shell, in the cemetery of *Sainte Geneviève*.

Even this resting-place had not been permanent; Albertine had seen the cemetery turned into gardens, streets and houses; she did not know where her brother's bones had been flung; she had also seen the same oblivion cover the sepulchre of Charlotte de Corday; the cemetery of the Madeleine had been closed in 1794. No one knew where the remains of Marat's assassin lay; Albertine had seen half the city rebuilt; the *hôtel de la Providence* was demolished; all the streets which bore any allusion to the Revolution had been renamed; the great square where the guillotine had stood was called *Place de la Concorde*.

Albertine's heart was unchanged; passionately, the stern, swarthy old woman dedicated herself to the cult of her brother, to her still a hero, a demi-god—"a martyr to Liberty."

She had collected with passionate zeal every relic of Marat that she could acquire and preserved them through every pinch of grim poverty; she had the MS. of a novel, *Comte Potowski*, written in the style of Rousseau in Marat's youth, the proof-sheets that Marat had been correcting in his bath when he was struck, a collection of prints and busts of her brother, his *Political Works* in twelve volumes, all the numbers of *L'Ami du peuple* annotated by the editor's own hand, two miniatures of Marat by Bosio, mounted prisms, a microscope, his case of medical instruments, a package of papers.

Sometimes the curious, the amateurs of history and of art would seek out Albertine Marat, to gaze at these relics of strange, dead times, to persuade her to talk of the days of the Terror.

She was taciturn and would tell nothing; but when she felt her strength ebbing with extreme old age, she sent for a young democrat of the day, Raspail, and showing him her poor treasury, told him she would make him heir to these precious relics.

"I am the sister of Marat, I follow his cult, I wish this garret to be his *Panthéon*. He always remains dear to me, reverence for him has never left my breast—pray accept and cherish these *souvenirs* of a great man."

Raspail was moved by the poverty of the garret and of the proud old woman around whom such echoes whispered; he promised to return, but the next day he was arrested at Nantes. When he returned to Paris he could not trace Albertine Marat nor her relics. She had become too infirm to work at watches or jewellery and one by one her beloved relics were sold to the curious and the compassionate.

In the month of November, 1841, she died, with two humble neighbours as her sole friends, aged eighty-three, in the most utter poverty.

She was buried in a pauper's grave; a stranger paid 6 *francs* for a wooden cross to be placed for a year above her grave.

With the stilling of this firm heart, this loyal spirit, the echoes of Marat's life and death faded into silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

## APOLLONIA-TERESA LUX

In Darmstadt lived another old woman, enclosed with her memories; she also was a pauper and lived in the alms-houses provided for the worthy poor of the city; friendless and alone, she had, even in her eightieth year, an air of pride and distinction.

Across fifty years, across seventy years came to her the echoes of Adam Lux; she was his second daughter. Her mother, Sabine Reuter, had died of typhus in 1814, faithful to the memory of her husband, whom she always praised and admired; soon after her death, the eldest sister was involved in tragedy.

The youngest child had died soon after her father and there were thus only Maria Anna and Apollonia-Teresa left out of the little family that Adam Lux had parted from so joyously in 1793.

Enthusiastic, solitary, dreamy, Maria Anna at twenty-five years of age read with the deepest excitement the poem by Jean-Paul Richter, in which he celebrated Charlotte de Corday and Adam Lux.

She wrote to the author a letter full of exaltation and mysticism; when no answer came she attempted suicide; Apollonia restrained her and two letters from Richter slightly consoled the daughter of Adam Lux.

Her sister married and she was left alone. Richter sent her a lock of his hair and asked for a meeting, but Maria Anna was resolute not to belong to this world; even this lofty romance was more than her fragile spirit could endure. One May night she threw herself into the Rhine; rescued while yet alive, she sternly refused all assistance; she declared that she



## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

had seen the lights of eternity, heard celestial music, and that she would not return to earth.

She was placed in bed, as she had asked, with her crucifix and her open Bible; they thought she slept and left her; when they returned she was dead, several hours after she had been taken from the river.

This echoed in the reserved heart of the old woman in Darmstadt, faintly, wistfully—it had been so long ago; she had had a lifetime of unhappiness herself, a wretched marriage, poverty, an old age reliant on charity. But as she grew older she saw the gulf of time spanned and there was present to her failing wits the picture of the young father, whom she had never seen, running to the guillotine in the twilight Paris square, for the sake of Charlotte de Corday.

She had no picture of him, no relic, the echoes grew very faint; when her eyes closed at last and she was taken to her pauper's grave, the last whisper of life and death had faded into nothingness.

\* \* \* \*

### MARJOTTE

Twenty-five, fifty years, and the echoes were still heavy over the Norman meadows, in the deserted chambers of farms and *châteaux*. Here nothing had changed, the leaves were thick on the chestnut trees, the blossom white on the hawthorn hedges, the lilies unfolding on the home pond; the modest house where Charlotte de Corday d'Armont was born stood unaltered; there was no change in the lonely church where she was christened, where, on holiday from the *abbaye-aux-dames*, she

would take the Holy Sacrament.

In the old bakehouse where Mlle. de Corday had gathered her children for their lessons, a woman of eighty-two had made her dwelling; a few chairs, a plank bed were the sole furnishing, the huge, unused oven served as cupboard and table; a high-placed window gave a soft light; all was very clean and decent; it was Fanchon Marjot, this little old woman, bent over her spinning wheel, muttering to herself, Marjotte, since she was fifteen years old, in the service of the noble family of Corday.

She had done her duty; thanks to her bravery and prudence, M. de Corday de Cauvigny had escaped the furies of the Revolution, had died peacefully in his *château*. But it was the grand-daughter whom she remembered most clearly; sunk in a stupor she dreamed of her bright young mistress; it was in order to evoke this image more clearly that she had returned to Mesnil-Imbert, to the old *fournil*.

The curious questioned her in her pathetic retreat.

"Do you remember Charlotte de Corday?"

The old woman was like one returned to life; at the sound of that name, her memories flowed into words.

"A child, a young maiden," that was how Marjotte always saw Charlotte de Corday—with her chestnut gold hair—"like a fleece."

Laughing with pleasure the old servant counted out the golden memories; "she was so serious, so modest, so gentle—and then, suddenly, a madcap! Such pleasure in her games! *la gaiété folle!* One had to leave everything to play with her!"

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

ALEXANDRINE DE FORBIN D'OPPEDE

In Italy, in France, a pious ex-nun laboured among the poor, in the hospitals, in the prisons until her health failed. She was Madame de Millière, formerly the Alexandrine de Forbin whose cause Charlotte de Corday had recommended in her letter to Charles Barbaroux.

Sometimes she too was questioned as to whether the echoes of many years ago came down to her—if she remembers Charlotte de Corday, her fellow-pupil at the *abbaye-aux-dames*, her girlhood's friend.

But the saintly woman would not take this name upon her lips, would not easily hear it mentioned; before her implacable piety all echoes fail.

Of all the old women who remember, Madame de Millière alone maintains silence. Without comment the ex-canoness of Troarn allows the life and death of Charlotte de Corday to pass into the steadfast twilight of immortal legend.

THE END

*London*

*October 25th, 1934.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE lives of Charlotte de Corday and J. P. Marat are extremely well documented; a large mass of contemporary material has been carefully and judiciously collected, annotated and classified by zealous experts, so that it is now possible to trace, with considerable exactitude, the whole careers of these two people; a bibliography of all the works written round them would compose a small volume in itself. Adam Lux has been less extensively treated; though passing allusions to his death are common; his character and life have not been subject to the voluminous treatment given to Charlotte de Corday and J. P. Marat; there is, however, no difficulty in reconstructing the man and his brief career.

Among the many admirable writers who have put all subsequent workers on this subject into their debt, special gratitude must be accorded to the labours of C. Vatel, G. Lenôtre, Cheron de Villiers, Dr. Cabanès and Decauville-Lachenée.

Memoirs, letters, newspapers and legal documents relating to the events of 1793 exist in abundance; the most important of the first of these are given in the brief bibliography that follows this note. The memoirs of the *Girondists*, written while hidden in the *grottes de Saint-Emilion*, appear to have passed into the hostile hands of Saint Marc-Antoine Julien and to have been treated as of little value until they were sold, as a bundle of old papers, to a bookshop in the Quai Voltaire in 1863; with them were the letters of Madame Roland to Buzot, the drama of Charlotte Corday by Salles and several notes by Charles Barbaroux.

Charlotte de Corday's girlhood is largely known from the *Souvenirs* of Mme. de Maromme and from accounts collected long after her death from friends of her youth; as there is no discrepancy between these as to the appearance, character and behaviour of Mlle. de Corday, no question of their general accuracy arises.

The above particulars are written in order that the reader of my study of this remarkable woman that it is *une biographie romancée*; every detail given is either beyond dispute or attested by reliable witnesses and passed by com-

petent authorities; reference to the works cited below will give the grounds for all the statements I have made. However, the method I have adopted of a straightforward narrative, advancing from sequence to sequence in these three lives, did not permit of debates, pros and cons, or qualified statements on obscure points. I did not feel this to be of much importance, as I had no problems to solve, no two sides of a question to give—the tale is clear and presents no mystery and little cause for differences of opinion. Here and there small difficulties arise; for instance, there is some uncertainty as to who was the first and who was the last of the friends taken leave of by Charlotte de Corday at Caen, and even as to the exact date of her final interview with Charles Barbaroux (July 7th or 8th); there are two different versions of the letter she wrote to her father before leaving Caen—that which I have given is in every way the more likely to be genuine; and there is even some possibility that she visited the Convention before visiting Marat. The extract from Louvet's *memoirs*—written under such terrible circumstances—gives us the one first-hand picture of Charlotte de Corday shortly before her departure for Paris—though written in a highly coloured style, it is no doubt accurate save for the detail about “the relative.” Louvet seems also to have been misinformed as to the young man who offered to change places with her, or to have confused the story of Adam Lux. The actual arrest of Charlotte de Corday is variously related, but the differences are slight and have no bearing on the main event; they arise from the confusion of the witnesses in the excitement of the moment. The often-repeated story of her having her Plutarch with her in Paris does not seem to be true. Nor is there good authority for the story of her talk with a child in the *Palais-Royal*, or her romantic meeting with a young Italian in Paris. These and similar legends have not been repeated.

On these and other small points the curious reader may consult the original documents and the arguments arising therefrom put forward by the French experts.

All extracts from memoirs or letters of the trials before the Tribunal, all conversations, etc., have been translated by myself from the originals; all the sources I have used are French. All the sentiments attributed to Adam Lux are to be found in his writings. The estimate of Charlotte de Corday in Chapter Eight is from his pamphlet. In the spelling of the

French names, which varies in different documents, Claude Déperret—Lauze Deperret or Du Perret, Péthion—Pétion, Bretheville—Bretteville, etc., I have adopted the form used by modern writers. Charlotte de Corday signed herself "Darmont," "Corday," and "Marie de Corday"; Marie seems to have been the baptismal name she was known by to her friends, but Charlotte was so universally used, even during the actual progress of her drama, that it would be pedantic not to continue to employ a name so famous, even if it be incorrect; I have therefore used her full title until she herself dropped this on the abolition of titles in 1790. In the address of Montané to the jury her correct name is given when she is described as "Marie-Anne-Charlotte Corday, *ci-devant* Darmont, ex-noble." When her name is quoted in extracts from contemporary Republican documents, it is given as Charlotte Corday—this was the title of Adam Lux's pamphlet.

Lux's own name is a Latin form, adopted when he entered the University, of his father's name, which was probably either Licht (light) or Luchs (lynx); particulars of his last days are to be found in the memoirs of Champagneux and Georges Kerner. None of the conversations is invented; they all rest on first-hand reports.

Exhaustive works have been devoted to the portraits of Charlotte de Corday and J. P. Marat; none of these is of any outstanding excellence and most take the form of sketches taken from memory or made by artists who had not seen the originals.

Dr. Cabanès remarks that out of two hundred portraits of Marat he examined, not two were alike. The sketches taken by Hauer during the trial of Charlotte de Corday and in the cell lack character and life, the countless pictures of the woman and the event made afterwards were either deliberate caricatures or conventional productions; the discrepancies in costume and background show their inaccuracies. For instance, in the print of "The Arrest of Charlotte de Corday," published in 1793, the bath stands in a large bedroom.

The dresses that Charlotte de Corday wore on her visits to Marat, the colour of her hair, her height, etc., have been the matter of learned discussion. I have read all the evidence and described her appearance and her clothes as they undoubtedly were; there seems no question that she was *blonde*, not *châtaine*, though probably she had hair with reddish or deep gold re-

flections—the *blond cendré* impression could arise from her habit of lightly powdering. There seems no question but that she was tall; the description on her passport would give the impression of a short woman, but apart from the likelihood that it may be inaccurate, a *pouce ancien* seems to have been much more than an inch, nearer the standard length of a man's thumb. If, however, Charlotte de Corday was only five feet three or four, she must have been extremely well-proportioned and had great dignity in her carriage, for all eye-witnesses describe her as tall; this is strange when we remember her habit, supposed to be common to Norman women, of holding her head in a drooping posture.

David's picture, taken so soon after the event, of the murder of Marat, is probably accurate in detail; Hauer also painted this subject.

There seem to be few portraits of Adam Lux extant; a silhouette is prefixed to the study by Borckel, *Adam Lux, ein Opfer der Schreckenszeit*, 1892.

The extracts given before the chapters have not been chosen for any special merit or permanent value, but merely to illustrate the mental atmosphere which in late eighteenth-century France it was impossible to escape. To a modern mind Rousseau and his school seem intolerably sentimental, and the half-understood classicism that deified Brutus and continually quoted fabulous heroes like Marcus Curtius or Mucius Scævola as examples to be followed, false and tiresome.

It is, however, impossible to understand the protagonists of the French Revolution without realising to what a height the enthusiasm both for Rousseau and for Plutarch rose; the whole of the Gironde created an imaginary Sparta and Rome about themselves until they lost sight of their own times and their own immediate problems. Vergniaud in particular hardly opened his lips without a reference to some classic hero or event; Buzot and Madame Roland both, in their *mémoires*, speak of Rousseau and Plutarch as being the most powerful influence of their youth. Letters and memoirs, so plentiful at this period, are usually couched in the style of Rousseau or Raynal—a style known to English readers from Richardson and Sterne and the unconscious caricatures of Mackenzie. If this tearful, exalted, sentimental and verbose manner seems self-conscious, artificial, and even foolish to modern ears, it should be remembered that it was absolutely sincere, that many of

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

these rhapsodies that seem now pompous, humourless and in bad taste were written under terrible circumstances or on the point of death; that the writers did know how to suffer, to sacrifice themselves for an ideal, to die with extraordinary courage. When the tension, the strain and the horror under which these people lived are remembered, and the heroism with which they met appalling disasters is recognised, the sentiment, often tiresome, and the classic virtue, often false, that supported them may seem allowable.

It is, too, a question of idiom, superb heroism may inspire flamboyant, dramatic eloquence, violent action, as well as laconic stoicism. No doubt collective hysteria, frenzy and genuine lunacy were behind many of the deeds that took place in a period of anarchy unparalleled in modern history, but there is no questioning the complete sanity of all the members of the *Gironde*, of Madame Roland, of Adam Lux, to take but that small section of the countless actors in that mighty drama dealt with in this study. And no one has ever doubted the lucid intelligence, the steady judgment, the noble self-abnegation and rigid self-control of Charlotte de Corday. It is notable, also, that neither her letters nor her recorded speech shows a trace of either the sentimentality or the heroics then more than a fashion, a cult, a faith. Pupil as she was of Rousseau, Raynal and Plutarch, her language is that of Corneille, grand, direct, concise; she had, also, a charming humour, too often absent in her contemporaries. Only in her *addressé* or testament, written under terrible circumstances, does she adopt the fashionable style of the moment.

To those readers who may dislike the practice, I present this excuse for some changes of the narrative into the historic present—some scenes seemed to me, as I was reconstructing them, so vivid in their actuality that I found it impossible to write of them as if they belonged to the past.

In presenting this short list, not only of the works I have used, but those most likely to illuminate my subject, I may add that the brilliant works of Lamartine, Michelet and Mignet should always be balanced against the solid modern scholarship of writers like Louis Le Blanc and Louis Madelin, and that the hectic, impassioned contemporary letters and memoirs should always be checked in the light of modern research.

I have included in my list the famous classic dictionary that appeared in the midst of the French Revolution, as this gives



## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

the conception of "antique" heroes and heroines common to that period (first edition, 1788—second, 1792), and presents a conception of classicism now completely outdated. The old-fashioned forms of Greek and Latin names are taken from this source.

One more observation: such contemporary accounts of the murder of Marat as mention where Charlotte de Corday hid the knife, say, *in her fichu*; this does not seem possible, as the fichu was of gauze, worn over a thin muslin dress; a heavy object that had to be concealed would certainly have been carried in a pocket that was strong enough to hold papers, a watch, etc.

The following brief notes either expand points touched upon above, or give information impossible to embody in the narrative; they are only for the curious reader.

All existing documents relating to Charlotte de Corday are in the National Collection in France or in private hands in that country; her letters have been several times reprinted; English translations of the letter to Charles Barbaroux are to be found in Mrs. Van Alstine's biography and in the English version of Michel Corday's book (*Charlotte Corday*), London, 1931. There are several relics of Charlotte Corday in the Musée Carnavalet and at the Musée de Versailles. In the last named is (or was till recently) David's picture of the *Death of Marat*. It is false in at least one particular—the second letter to the deputy, which he never received, is shown on the board that serves as desk. Even Montané seemed to be under the impression that Marat received this letter, which was not delivered owing to his death. Hauer's portrait is in this same *Salle de la Révolution*, Versailles. The crayon by Brard, sketched during the journey to the scaffold, is in the possession of the town of Caen. David's painting of the death of Lepeletier Saint-Fargeau was destroyed, but a drawing by this artist of the head of the murdered man remains; it is a strong contrast, in its dignity and grace, to the hideous likeness, also by David, of Marat's bloodless face, taken after his death; the fidelity of this last is attested by the similarity of the sketch to the death mask. When David was working from nature he was a powerful artist, his sound technique shows to better advantage in his drawings than in his paintings. The drawing of Saint-Fargeau is in the Hennin Collection, that of Marat is in the Musée Grévin. The *Typus Mundi* mentioned in the text may be seen

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

in the *Salle Révolutionnaire* of the Musée Carnavalet.

The house of Madame de Bretteville in Caen is frequently referred to as *Le Grand-Manoir*. This mistake seems to have originated with Lamartine; it was disposed of as early as 1847 by M. Desnau de Crouzilhac in an article in the *Revue de Rouen*, but has been since repeated; the mansion known as *le Grand Manoir* was situated near to Madame de Bretteville's house in the rue Saint-Jean which was partially rebuilt in 1852.

All that is known about M. Hippolyte Bougon-Longrais, mentioned in Charlotte de Corday's letter to Barbaroux, is to his credit; his *Réflexions sur la Guerre*, published in Calvados in 1792, gained much applause, and he became deputy-Attorney-General of the Department of Calvados; a passport was issued to him on the day of Marat's murder, on which he is described as twenty-seven years old, fair, with blue eyes, aquiline nose, oval face, five feet three inches in height. He behaved with great moderation in his difficult position, but was obliged to fly before the victorious army of the Convention marching on Caen. After many adventures he joined the *Royalists* in the Vendée and became secretary to the romantic and handsome Antoine Philippe de la Trémouille, Prince de Talmont. After the defeat at Mans, these two young men were captured (Jan., 1794). Talmont was beheaded at Laval and Bougon-Longrais at Rennes. In the farewell letter to his mother, written on the morning of his last day, is a long reference to Charlotte de Corday. There is no need to doubt its sincerity, because it is written in the emotional style of the period:

*"If only, like my beloved Charlotte, I had been able in my last moments to lull myself to sleep with a sweet and deceptive illusion that peace and order had been restored to my country! But I cannot! I am leaving this world tormented by the idea that blood is going to flow in even greater torrents! O Charlotte Corday! O my noble and generous friend! The memory of you has never ceased to fill my heart and my mind. Wait for me, I am coming to you! The desire to avenge you has made me bear with life until this moment. But I think that I have now satisfied the demands of this sacred duty. I die happy and worthy of you."*

The Marquis de Faudoas, his sister-in-law, and his daughter Eléonore, friends and neighbours of Charlotte de Corday in

Caen, died on the scaffold, July 14th, 1794; the Marquis had returned to Paris to take up his place beside the King. Madame Lavallant and her daughter, other close friends of Charlotte de Corday, more prudent, withdrew to Rouen, the ancient capital of Normandy which remained one of the most peaceful places in France during the revolution. The latter, afterwards Madame Loyer de Maromme, left the *mémoires* of her famous friend; these contain some errors, and her account of the farewell supper party when Charlotte de Corday refused to drink the King's health has been doubted because the writer has confused the dates. She says this event took place on Sept. 29th, 1791, on the same day as Fauchet's entry into Caen as Constitutional Bishop. This, however, took place on May 11th, and Fauchet left for Paris on Sept. 28th, 1791; the anecdote bears the appearance of truth and probably the later date is correct and Fauchet was leaving Caen. All the letters (save two) Charlotte wrote to this friend, Madame de Maromme, at Rouen, were destroyed in fear of persecution after Marat's murder; the two that survived were published at the end of Madame Maromme's *mémoires*, published in 1862 by her relative, Casimir-Périer, father of the President of France. It is Madame de Maromme who is in part responsible for the errors which have been continually repeated with regard to Henry de Belzunce. His full name was Belzunce-Macaie and he was only a distant relative of the Abbess, Madame de Belzunce de Castelmoron, who died on Jan. 30th, 1787, two years before the Vicomte de Belzunce joined the garrison at Caen, April 1789. It is not likely he ever met Charlotte de Corday, but most probable that she knew of him and was profoundly shocked by his murder.

The famous journal of Marat's editing was termed first *Le Publiciste Parisien* (from 12th September, 1789), then on its revival on 26th September, 1792, *L'Ami du peuple*, then *Le Journal de la République*, and lastly *Le Publiciste de la République*, after March 14th, 1793. The famous title, *L'Ami du peuple*, so often applied to Marat himself, has been used throughout my text in order to avoid confusion and to follow the usage of other writers. For the same reason the famous term *Girondists* has been employed instead of that of *Brisotins*, which was in contemporary use.

Gustave Doulcet de Pontécoulant, though a member of the Mountain, is supposed to have been in hiding when Charlotte de Corday named him as her advocate; he came forward, how-

ever, with great courage, as has been related, to defend himself against the charge of cowardice; he became President of the Convention in 1795, of the Five Hundred in the following year, Count and Senator of the Empire, a *pair de France*, after the restoration of the Bourbons, and died in 1853.

Claude-François Chauveau-Lagarde, born in 1756, was a very interesting character; a lawyer by profession, he contrived to pass through the Revolution in safety, without mingling in politics, and yet he defended with tact and dignity many of the most famous victims of the period, Miranda, Brissot and Marie Antoinette, as well as Charlotte de Corday. He offered to defend Madame Roland, but she generously refused his services. He paid Mlle. de Corday's debts the day after her execution. His death took place in 1841 and it is from the notes he took during the trial of Charlotte de Corday that subsequent accounts are derived.

In his biography of Charlotte de Corday, M. Michel Corday, descended from a female cousin of his heroine, gives the following particulars of the Corday family:

"M. de Corday d'Almont was outlawed in 1798 and died soon after at Barcelona.

"Jacques-Adrien-Alexis de Corday, his elder son, served in the Spanish Army, fought in La Vendée, survived the Revolution and married in 1803 Mlle. Marthe de Hauvel.

"Charles-François-Jacques, the younger son, was killed at Quiberon, beside his uncle, M. de Corday de Glatigny.

"Eléonore de Corday d'Armont died, aged thirty-six.

"Charlotte de Corday's uncle and tutor, the *abbé* de Corday, fled in 1792 to Jersey and afterwards to Winchester, returned to France and died, Dean of Coulibœuf, in 1825.

"Madame de Bretteville died in 1799 at her estate at Verson."

Charlotte de Corday was the great-granddaughter of Pierre Corneille, not, as is often stated, his great-grand niece, i.e., she did not descend from Thomas Corneille, as some writers declare, but from Pierre Corneille's daughter Marie, who married Jacques de Farcey, and whose daughter, Françoise de Farcey, married Adrien de Corday—their son Jacques-Adrien de Corday was the grandfather of Charlotte de Corday.

Two curious items remain to be noted; a skull purporting to be that of Charlotte de Corday appeared in 1840 and was exhibited in Paris, 1889. Dr. Cabanès has dealt with this relic and all the anecdotes appertaining to it in *Cabinet secret de*

## THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

*l'histoire, troisième série*, Paris, N.D. It is not likely that the skull is really that of Mlle. de Corday.

The M. Fauldès, who was one of the jurymen who tried Charlotte de Corday, was the victim in the horrible and mysterious murder of 1817, and some writers have tried to connect this famous crime with Mlle. de Corday. The story goes that Fauldès had undertaken to save Mlle. de Corday, failed, and was murdered in revenge twenty-four years later. Nothing could be more unlikely. For an excellent account of this extraordinary crime, see *L'Assassinat de M. Fualdès*, by Arman Praviel in the series *Drames Judiciaires d'Autrefois*, published by Perrin et Cie, Paris.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1789

The Meeting of the States General	May 5th
Oath of the <i>Jeu de Paume</i> and formation of the National Assembly	June 23rd
Fall of the Bastille	July 14th
Abandonment of " <i>Tous les privilèges</i> "	Aug. 4th
The National Assembly draws up Declaration of the Rights of Man	Aug. 26th
March on Versailles	Oct. 5th
The Prince de Condé organises the " <i>Grande Armée</i> " of émigrés at Coblenz	July-Oct.

1790

Reorganisation of the Church and abolition of Convents, etc.	July 12th
Festival of Federation on the <i>Champ-de-Mars</i>	July 14th

1791

Death of Mirabeau	April 2nd
<i>Assignats</i> put into circulation	May 6th
Arrest of the Royal Family at Varennes	June 21st
Ashes of Voltaire taken to the <i>Panthéon</i>	July 11th
Legislative Assembly meet	Oct. 1st

1792

War declared against the Empire	April 20th
Proclamation " <i>La patrie en danger</i> "	July 3rd
Attack on the <i>Tuilleries</i>	Aug. 10th
Revolutionary Commune established in Paris	
Capture of Longwy	Aug. 23rd
Massacres in the Prisons	Sept. 2nd-6th
Valmy	Sept. 20th
National Convention and Proclamation of a Republic	Sept. 21st
Jemappes	Nov. 6th

# THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

1793

Murder of Michael Lepeletier de Saint-Fargeau	Jan. 20th
Execution of the King	Jan. 21st
Convention decree the Forced Levy	Feb. 23rd
Revolutionary Tribunal	March 10th
Neervinde, defeat and flight of Dumouriez	March 18th
Committee of Public Safety	April 6th
Fall of the <i>Gironde</i>	May 30th
Revolt of the Provinces	May, June, July
The First Reign of Terror and Reconstitution of Committee of Public Safety	July 10th
Murder of Marat	July 13th

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# THE ANGEL OF THE ASSASSINATION

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